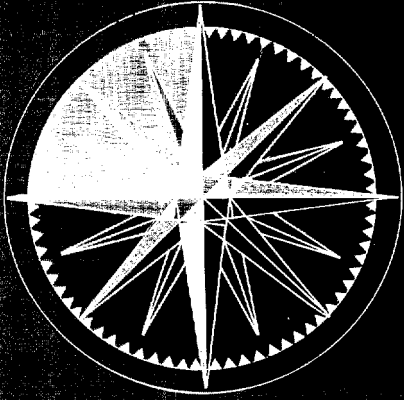


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BRITAIN'S HIGH COMMISSION TERRITORIES BECOMING INDEPENDENT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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BRITAIN'S HIGH COMMISSION TERRITORIES BECOMING INDEPENDENT

The scheduled independence of Bechuanaland on 30 September, Basutoland on 4 October, and Swaziland within the next two years brings new potential for political conflict in racially troubled southern Africa. The manner in which surrounding white territories, especially South Africa, exert their influence to keep friendly governments in these vulnerable black states could increase international pressure for action against the white redoubt. All are now ruled by traditionalist governments that are keenly aware of their dependence on South Africa and are anxious to keep relations smooth. They nevertheless face opposition elements which press for policies in keeping with radical independent African states to the north. Much will depend on whether South Africa's new Prime Minister Vorster manages the same subtlety that Vorwoerd did in influencing developments in the territories.

International Implications

For Britain, withdrawal removes one element of friction with Pretoria. Long ruled by the British High Commission in Pretoria (hence the collective term "High Commission Territories"), the areas have been the object of annexation ambitions by successive South African governments. Britain, however, has kept its promise not to incorporate them into South Africa without their consent. During its rule, Britain had to balance the reality of Pretoria's overwhelming local power with the growth of local African nationalism and pressures from the Commonwealth and elsewhere.

The territories' strategic location for any future hostile action against South Africa, Rhodesia, or Mozambique has

already made them targets for influence by those wishing to destroy white rule in southern Africa. For some time to come, however, awareness of their dependence on South Africa will lessen the domestic appeal of a hostile policy toward Pretoria. The general reluctance of major powers to take effective measures against South Africa also makes the new states anxious to head off any confrontation. However, given the possibility of an increasing South African bluntness in pursuing its vested interests in the territories, the desire of most African states to use any issue to club the Pretoria government, and the likelihood of UN membership for the new states, any local conflict may quickly have wide-ranging international repercussions.

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Bechuanaland: Botswana

Botswana, as Bechuanaland is to be called on becoming independent on 30 September, is an arid, Texas-sized country of only half a million people who live under almost continuing threat of famine. Eighty percent of these people live in the extreme eastern part of the country along a narrow, railroad strip. Only about 14,000 earn regular wages --almost all from the government. Most people combine subsistence farming with the raising of cattle of poor quality, subject to periodic drought and disease. The livestock contribute over 80 percent of the value of exports, which go mainly to the UK and South Africa.

At least 30,000 Botswana work in mines and on farms in South Africa, some residing there permanently and transmitting some of their earnings to relatives back home. The country has coal and copper deposits, but these remain unexploited for lack of the necessary infrastructure. Botswana has, at most, 40 African university graduates and its secondary schools graduate only about 100 students annually. British grants have roughly equalled domestic government revenues in recent years. A sizable portion of public revenue comes from South Africa in the form of rebates from a customs-union pool in which all the former High Commission Territories participate.

Botswana's politics have much the same characteristics

as its economy--predominantly traditional with small pockets of modern activity. President Seretse Khama, de facto paramount chief of the Bamangwato (the largest of the country's eight major tribes), was once denied the royal office because of his marriage to an English secretary. The marriage was considered improper by the regent--his uncle--for reasons of tribal tradition, and by the British because of concern over disturbing relations with South Africa. Nonetheless, Khama's claim to royalty is still widely respected, and it has helped the meteoric rise and sustained strength of his Democratic Party.

Khama formed his party in 1962--two years after the first political party was organized. An Oxford-educated member of the traditional "establishment," Khama wants to slowly erode the political power of chiefs and otherwise modernize Botswana's political and social institutions along with its economy. At the same time, he recognizes the dangers to social and political stability inherent in a rapid introduction of modern ideas and practices. Khama also believes that militant African nationalism, as voiced by opposition party leaders, is inappropriate for his poor and vulnerable country. However, he has tried to cultivate an image of himself among members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) as a fellow African nationalist doing his best under the

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circumstances. Thus, Khama gives asylum to South African refugees so long as they do not launch provocative operations against the Pretoria government, and he has condemned Rhodesia's white rebellion without stopping minor oil shipments from South Africa to Rhodesia across Botswana. He is aware that any such disruption could lead to the construction of a direct rail link between the two white-ruled countries and bring adverse economic consequences to Botswana.

Botswana's three opposition parties--the Peoples Party, the Independence Party, and the National Front--suffer from the liabilities common to parties in all three of the former High Commission Territories. The radicalism of their leaders appeals only to a small following in the few towns. Constant bickering among the leaders on matters unrelated to policy has led to periodic splits into factions and then into separate parties. The parties' occasional financial sponsors in radical African and Communist countries have apparently become disillusioned.

Khama's Democratic Party, profiting from its divided opposition, the respect for its royal leader among the majority traditionalist citizens, and the organizing abilities of its deputy leader, Vice President Quett Masire, won 80 percent of the vote in the general elections of March 1965 and an equally overwhelming victory in municipal council elections last June. President

Khama, therefore, leads Botswana into independence with a majority of 28 seats in the 31-member legislature.

Nevertheless, Khama's government faces potential opposition from several sources. Although he has avoided promises of unattainable economic and other advances after independence, even limited development plans will stir great expectations which cannot be satisfied. Moreover, latent tribal and other parochial interests could emerge at any time to disrupt the political calm. Certain chiefs have started to realize how suavely the Democratic Party is maneuvering traditional authorities out of positions of power in the new political institutions. Dr. Kenneth Koma, the National Front's skillful secretary general who returned to Botswana in 1965 from graduate study in London and six years residence in eastern Europe, has tried to bring together the unhappy chiefs and the bickering opposition leaders.

The presence of South African refugees also poses problems. Not only do they tend to compete among themselves along the lines of their squabbles inside South Africa, but they competitively support the more militant leaders of opposition parties in the other two former High Commission Territories. Finally, African radicals as well as Communist powers have shown interest in using Botswana as a base for activities against South Africa.

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Basutoland: Lesotho

Lesotho, as Basutoland will be called following its independence on 4 October, is almost totally dependent economically on South Africa, which surrounds it geographically. Nearly half of the country's adult males work in South African mines and other enterprises. As with Botswana, Lesotho receives much of its public revenue through its customs arrangements with South Africa. Its only promising economic development prospect is the long-discussed Oxbow River scheme, whereby Lesotho would sell water and hydroelectric power to South Africa.

Most of the roughly 860,000 Lesotho who do not work in South Africa live a traditional life on subsistence farms. Wool, mohair, and hides comprise the major exports. Lesotho has no known significant mineral resources; its poor communications and transportation system could not exploit any deposits that might be discovered. The country could possibly become self-sufficient in food with improved cultivation techniques. However, a major impediment to agricultural development is the absence of individual land ownership. According to traditional law, the paramount chief owns all land.

Of all the former High Commission Territories, Lesotho has the most unstable political situation, with a three-cornered power contest. This situation results from the breakdown of the traditional alliance of clans

under a paramount chief having limited powers.

Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan's National Party is traditionalist in its base of support and in its attitude toward running the country. The National Party is hostile to the radicalism of other African governments and to the activism of political refugees from South Africa. It is willing to establish normal relations with Pretoria on the basis of virtual vassalage. The six-year-old party holds only 32 of the 60 seats in the legislature, however, and has never won a majority of the popular vote. In the latest general elections, held in 1965, it received only a 42-percent plurality. Jonathan, a popular chief of a Basuto sub-tribe, was defeated and had to arrange a by-election in a safe constituency to return to the legislature.

The strongest opposition comes from the radical Congress Party, which holds 25 seats. The Congress Party uses the slogans and money of radical African and Communist governments, and is anxious to test how far Lesotho could flaunt African nationalist colors without bringing retribution from Pretoria. The party's approach appeals to urban wage earners, to the small but politically active urban "intelligentsia," and to African civil servants who resent the government's favoritism toward its own supporters. Congress Party leader Ntsu Mokhehle, for all his radicalism and willingness to use outside Communist support, is

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determined to keep control of the party in his own hands. Ever since 1961, when Communists among South African refugees tried to take over the party in hopes of controlling Lesotho for future operations against South Africa, Mokhehle has made a clear distinction between his relationship with Communists outside and those within his country.

The third side of Lesotho's political triangle is formed by the Marema-tlou Freedom Party (MFP) and by the paramount chief of the country, Motlotlehi Moshoshe II. Originally, the MFP was a tribal "establishment" party, differing from the National Party primarily on the basis of personality clashes, old feuds, and positions taken regarding Moshoshe's right to the paramount chieftaincy in 1960. The MFP gained some strength between 1962 and 1964 from its lucrative association with Communist elements among South African refugees and from its ties with less radical modernists, but that association contributed to the party's poor showing in the 1965 elections. The MFP has since broken its left-wing connections, and many of its chiefs have gone over to the ruling National Party.

Ill will reportedly has existed between Moshoshe and Prime Minister Jonathan since 1960 when Jonathan is said to have tried to prevent the young Oxford student's accession to the chieftainship. Perhaps with an eye on the Kabaka's ouster early this year in Uganda, Moshoshe probably believes that his royal office may be in jeopardy after the British leave. He threatened to appeal to his

followers for violence unless Lesotho's independence constitution gave him extensive powers. Since Britain rejected his demands, however, he seems to be considering an accommodation with Jonathan's government, perhaps realizing that, after independence, Jonathan can count on South Africa to help his security forces.

Swaziland

Swaziland, which might be known as Ngwane when it achieves independence, is the least politically advanced of the former High Commission Territories but the only one with the potential for economic viability. Nevertheless, it too is subject to economic and political pressure from South Africa, which supplies almost all of the country's capital investment and managerial skill.

As in the rest of black Africa, most of Swaziland's roughly 390,000 people live on subsistence farms. Many make temporary wage employment either in their own country or in South Africa, however, and a larger percentage than in Botswana or Lesotho are permanently employed in budding local industries and services. The country has one of the largest asbestos mines in the world, and a rich iron ore deposit is being mined by a South African group.

The possible political disruptions arising out of Swaziland's relatively more-developed economy are mitigated by its having the most cohesive tribal structure of the three territories. Swaziland is a traditional

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nation with a tight social pyramid culminating in the paramount chief, who has not only certain political and economic powers but ritual and spiritual ones as well.

The present paramount chief, Sobhuza II, has skillfully used the still-pervasive traditionalism of the Swazis, their sense of being a distinct group, and their continuing respect for his office to build a strong political party, the Imbokodvo Emabalabala (meaning "tough grinding stone"). This party won all eight of the legislative seats chosen by African voters in the most recent elections, held in 1964. Sobhuza and his Swazi National Council of chiefs chose eight other Legislative Council members, and the whites, comprising less than one percent of the population, elected eight more from their separate electoral roll.

Formed only a few months prior to the 1964 elections, the Imbokodvo originally was a party of the tribal "establishment," represented by the traditional Swazi National Council, and was allied to the United Swaziland Association that represented local white economic interests. Shortly after the elections, however, the Imbokodvo began to articulate more nationalistic demands for a postindependence Swaziland. The Paramount Chief's party demanded an end to separate legislative seats and voting rolls for the races, parity of wages for black and white workers, more education and health facilities, no special guarantee of land ownership rights to whites, and the ownership of all mineral

rights by the Swazi nation. The Imbokodvo also began to establish youth groups and to bring the trade unions into a federation allied to the party.

At the same time, Sobhuza welcomed back into the national fold (as he thinks of the Imbokodvo) those leaders of modernist parties who saw the hopelessness of opposition to the traditional establishment and who believed they could be more effective by liberalizing the policy of the traditional power structure from within. One of these, Simon Nxumalo, used his extensive personal contacts and reputation as an African nationalist to win favor for the Imbokodvo from some of the more radical African governments.

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The fate of Swaziland's only real left-wing group illustrates the territory's political trends. The Ngwane National Liberation Congress was formed in 1963 following a factional split in another opposition party. The Congress commanded some support from the infant trade unions and the urban unemployed. One of its top figures, Dumisa Dlamini, did much to intensify a 1963 general strike which required the intervention of British troops--the only such crisis in any of the three territories. Within the past month, however, both he and another Congress leader have denounced the

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bickering within their party and gone over to the Imbokodvo.

Paramount Chief Sobhuza is alert to the possibility that Dlamini and other less radical modernists have joined the Imbokodvo with the idea of taking it over for their own purposes,

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So far, there is no indication that any of the modernists have reached positions from which they could challenge Sobhuza and the Swazi National Council.

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One of Sobhuza's emerging problems is how to carry the other chiefs along with his plans for guided and limited progress. He believes that the Imbokodvo must stay ahead of the Congress in championing the modernist forces that will emerge as economic development proceeds and Swaziland becomes more in-

involved in the political problems of southern Africa.

A new constitution, negotiated in London last summer, provides the framework for political change between now and independence, which is set to come before 1969. The constitution curtails the powers of the chiefs, but probably not so much as to alienate them from Sobhuza and the Imbokodvo. They may be somewhat reassured by the powers retained by Paramount Chief Sobhuza, who keeps the right to appoint one fifth of the members of the lower house and half of the upper house, to dissolve parliament, and, perhaps most important, to act as trustee of land and minerals. Sobhuza is 66 years old, however, and any successor might show less skill in balancing the traditionalist and modernist elements in an independent country.

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