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AN OUTLINE OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EVENTS
IN SWAZILAND

by

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The history of economic development in Swaziland, since the influence of western civilization made itself felt, may be divided into four phases:

1. The first of these phases began when the Europeans made effective contact with the Swazi ⁽¹⁸⁴⁵⁾ and ended with the establishment of British rule at the close of the Anglo-Boer War. If this period is to receive a label it may well be called the era of the concessionaire.
2. The second phase was a long one lasting from 1903 until the end of World War II. This was the era of hope but uncertainty. Trade and economic depressions as well as two world wars prevented the capital, so urgently required for development, from becoming available.
3. It was not until 1945 that the era of progress really began. The initial impetus for this third phase of development was provided by expanding and more stable markets for agricultural produce, the influx of

European settlers and especially the availability of capital for investment in development projects. During this period which lasted from 1945 to the early 1960's three major irrigation projects were established, and over 176,000 acres of exotic softwood plantations were developed. Primary industry based on forestry and irrigation farming consists of a box mill and patulite factory in the Pigg's Peak area, a pulp mill at Bunya in the Usutu Forests, sugar mills at Big Bend and Mhlume, a rice mill, a citrus packing plant and a cannery.

The total value of agricultural products (i.e. commercial and food crops) exported from Swaziland increased from R252,000 in 1950 to R3,958,000 in 1960, i.e. a 15 fold increase. The total value of all products exported more than doubled during this decade. The contrast with pre-war figures is even more remarkable. In 1938 total exports were valued at R254,000, in 1960 at R11,862,000 and ^{at} ~~R21,000,000~~ ^{at} R21,000,000 (in 1963).

4. The fourth phase of development I would suggest, began in the early 1960's. This decade has seen the entry of Swaziland into the phase of hope but uncertainty once again. Hope is provided by the continued capital

investments in the Territory and increased production. Uncertainty is created by recent political and constitutional developments.

Even in a world conditioned to rapid change the events of the last year in Swaziland have been quite remarkable - especially when it is remembered that Swaziland is a small territory, being roughly the size of Wales or 6,704 square miles in extent, and inhabited by some 2,200 Eurafrians, 8,000 Europeans and 250,000 Africans.

- i) The elections for Swaziland's first Legislative Council took place in June 1964 and the Council met for the first time in September.
- ii) A new hydro-electric project at Edwaleni, costing R4.3 m, was opened in September 1964.
- iii) In November 1964 Swaziland's first railway line was officially opened. The railway which is 137 miles long, links the Ngwenya iron ore mine which is situated about 13 miles north west of Mbabane on Bomvu Ridge, with Lourenco Marques. The total cost of this project was approximately R18 m.
- iv) Also in November 1964, Sir Hugh Stevenson officially opened the Ngwenya iron-ore mine (cost approximately R7 m.) From surface surveys it has been estimated that the ore

resources amount to at least 47 million tons. Although the main justification for the railway in the first instance was the decision to exploit these iron ore reserves, the wide implications of railway development should not be overlooked. An R80 m. contract for the supply of 12,000,000 tons of ore over a period of ten years to the Yawata and Fuji steel companies of Japan has already been signed.

In order to see these impressive developments in perspective it is necessary to study them in relation to the whole economy of Swaziland. When this is done it becomes clear that the gap between the "have" and the "have not" sectors of the economy is an ever-widening one. Swaziland is primarily an agrarian country and the rural economy falls naturally into two parts, the one dealing with production on the individual tenure holdings, owned principally by Europeans, and the other with production on the communal held lands of the Swazi. Given political stability, the nature of future development on the individual tenure holdings will depend less on the potential of the physical environment than on the vagaries of extra-territorial markets. The problems of the Swazi section of the rural economy are

far more serious than those facing the individual tenure holdings.

Two salient features emerged from a study in 1960 of land utilization in the Swazi rural areas. The first was the extent of the maize shortage and the second was the extent of over-stocking. Of the two the latter presents by far the more serious problem. These problems are not new to Swaziland but with the passage of time they have assumed larger proportions. Although the 1959/60 season was reasonably good for agricultural production, 55% of all the homesteads had to buy maize; the estimated ^{quantity} ~~total~~ of maize bought amounted to 62,600 bags. Overstocking is present in all the physiographic regions of Swaziland. In absolute numbers, livestock units should be reduced by 160,000 (or 37%) - out of a total of 425,000.

From a detailed analysis of existing conditions it appears that rural production is geared primarily to satisfy the basic food requirements of the homesteads and no more. Other needs are apparently met mainly from wage earnings. This dualistic structure, with its subsistence sector and its money sector, is fundamental to an understanding of the rural economy.

The extent to which the intrusive element of wage earning

has complicated the simple pattern of a population dependent on land for both its subsistence and its cash incomes, has been analysed by Hughes⁽¹⁾ from the data collected during the 1960 Random Sample Survey. In this analysis he found that slightly over half of the Swazi homesteads relied on wages for over 80% of their cash incomes. Future agronomic policy must face this issue and the question which it poses; can agriculture be made a more profitable alternative to wage earning?

In order to make agriculture more attractive, it would be necessary to develop an intensive system of farming in which cash cropping played an important role. Estimates by the Department of Land Utilization indicate that an enterprising Swazi farmer, cultivating twelve acres under dryland conditions, could expect an annual net cash income of R180-R200, provided he had assured markets and employed techniques which were superior to those presently adopted by the majority of Swazi. When it is realized that a quarter of the families already have annual cash incomes of R130 and in some cases over R170 there seems little incentive for the Swazi to change their traditional way of life and make the sacrifices needed to become full time peasant farmers.

(1) Hughes, A.J.B., Ch.8, Experiment in Swaziland, Edited by J.F. Holleman. O.U.P. 1964.

Low yields and small profits are often attributed to the fact that the Swazi do not have security of tenure. There is insufficient time to deal with this question in detail, but, I believe that a complete change to a system of individual tenure holdings would create more problems than it would solve. § The main features concerning the rural economy of the Swazi-held lands can be summarized as follows:

- a) The need to de-stock.
- b) The dualistic nature of the economy has become firmly established.
- c) Cash cropping cannot yet be accepted as a practical proposition for the greater part of the rural population.
- d) Individual land tenure is not the panacea for all ills.
- e) Provision must be made for the small number of progressive farmers.
- f) The tempo of development in the Swazi areas is lagging ever farther behind that of the European sector.

The problems are numerous and complex and it cannot be claimed that ready solutions can be easily found. Further research and experimental projects are necessary because the economic welfare of all groups in the Territory is interdependent. It is vital that these questions are tackled as the Swazi are entering a period of rapid population increase.

new paragraph.

In reviewing the political situation in Swaziland the three salient points of the old regime which prevailed before 1964, were :-

1. The Resident Commissioner was the head of Government.
2. The European Advisory Council could only advise the Resident Commissioner on matters directly affecting the European residents of Swaziland.
3. The Paramount Chief or Ngwenyama, Sobuza II was a constitutional monarch bound by the advice of the Swazi National Council (Libandhla) which, at its widest extension is a council of every adult male in the Nation.

The main features of the new constitution are:-

- i) Sobuza is recognised as the Ngwenyama or King of all races in Swaziland and he has the authority to refer any legislation with which he is dissatisfied direct to the Queen of England.
- ii) Her Majesty's Commissioner, who replaces the Resident Commissioner, is directly responsible to the Colonial Secretary.
- iii) Her Majesty's Commissioner has executive powers. In exercising these he is assisted by an Executive Council consisting of three ex-officio members and five other members appointed by himself, four of whom have to be

members of the Legislative Council.

- iv) The Legislative Council consists of :-
- a) The Queen's Commissioner.
 - b) A speaker appointed by the Commissioner.
 - c) The official members of the Executive Council.
 - d) Twenty-four elected members.
 - e) Nominated members to represent interests not otherwise adequately represented or to ensure the continuation of Government in abnormal circumstances.

The twenty-four elected members include eight Swazi elected by the Ngwenyama-in-Council by traditional methods; eight Europeans - four elected on a European roll and four on a national roll; and eight persons of any race elected on a National roll.

While not pretending to be a constitutional expert, I should like to comment on the advantages and disadvantages of this new constitution ~~and recent events~~ as they appear to me.

The Advantages:

- i) Swaziland is in a position to develop as a State in which all people have equality of citizenship irrespective of race, colour or creed. Even before the elections a start was made to remove all elements of racial discrimination from the laws of the Territory.

- ii) The Ngwenyama's special position has been recognised.
- iii) In this transitional period the power of the Swazi National Council has not been overlooked or neglected. The Swazi political system is still firmly rooted in tradition and, although beginning to wane, the power of the Ngwenyama and the local chiefs in Swaziland is still a reality. Swaziland only came effectively under European control at the beginning of this century and no attempt was ever made to break the authority of the traditional leaders as was the case in South Africa.
- iv) The original proposal to have an equal number of Swazi and non-Swazi on the Council has been dropped. The disparity of numbers would make such a proposal hard to justify.

~~There are several apparent danger spots in the new constitution.~~

The Disadvantages.

The new constitution is no more than a temporary compromise. In the absence of agreement between the opposing parties at the London Conference, the Colonial Secretary, Mr Sandys, included items in the new constitution on his own responsibility. These differences which have still not been settled manifest themselves in the struggle between the various African Nationalist parties and the

~~traditional authority~~ of the chiefs, *exercising traditional authority.*

The Nationalist Parties reacted to the new constitution by organizing a reasonably successful strike. Sobuza reacted by holding a referendum in which he asked his people to support his policies. Although the Nationalist Parties boycotted this move, Sobuza obtained overwhelming support. His next move was to launch his own political movement and at a meeting of tribesmen in April he accepted a recommendation to nominate approved candidates for the seats on the national roll. In this move Sobuza was supported by the principal European Party - the United Swaziland Association. By identifying himself with a political movement the Ngwenyama risked his own status and position. However all his nominated candidates were elected to the Council. Nevertheless it might have been more prudent for Sobuza to have remained aloof from political associations. In time the growth of political parties may well serve a useful purpose, but already one is justified, I think, in posing the question, "What influence will the chiefs and the National Council have once Sobuza is off the political scene?" To my knowledge there is no up and coming member of the Royal Household who could readily take over Sobuza's mantle.

Unlike Basutoland, Swaziland is faced with the problem of African and non-African working together in the political field. In this present phase of hope but uncertainty, Swaziland's task is to search for an appropriate pattern of government which will enable it to weld together the good from its diversified heritage - whether this be from its ties with the United Kingdom or its own indigenous institutions. Swaziland must become politically stable if she is to benefit economically from the rich and diversified physical environment with which she has been blessed.

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