

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

JS-14
Mwanza--A Fact Sheet

P.O. Box 162
Mwanza, Tanganyika
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New York 17, New York

Dear Mr. Nolte:

Mwanza, or Muanza as the early explorers spelt it, is the third largest town in Tanganyika and the largest port on Lake Victoria. The most plausible explanation of its name is that it is a corruption of "Ngwa Nyanza" or "to the lake" in kisukuma, the local language. The hills that surround the town, together with the heavily-forested islands one can see from its shore, remind the American visitor of the Maine coast. Outside Mwanza to the east, the country is rolling, scrub-covered and dotted with small granite hills, the remains of eons of erosion, which look as if they were dropped by an overlaid giant who was distracted and in a hurry. West of the town, Lake Victoria, about the size of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont, has been rising since 1962, submerging roads, flooding houses, and threatening to swamp the docking facilities of the Lake steamers.

The two main streets of Mwanza stretch out like legs from a traffic circle shaded by lush mango trees planted by the Arab slavers and filled now with chattering monkeys. The biggest and most modern building, the Victoria Federation of Cooperative Unions



(VFCU) headquarters, dominates one side of the circle, overshadowing the Germanic, fortress-like Area offices and two commercial banks. One of the streets, Kenyatta Road, is calmer and more shaded than the other: on it are the Mwanza Hotel, (behind which is the small Asian library where 21 delegates met to form the Pan African Freedom Movement for East and Central Africa in 1958) several European businesses and four gas stations. Nyerere Road, the other main street, is treeless and glaring, crowded with Asian shops and weaving bicycles. Just off it, a half mile from the circle, is the town market; a lively, multicolored confusion of noises and smells.

Mwanza is 3700 feet above sea-level and has a generally pleasant climate, though it is often windless because of the surrounding hills. During the hot season of December, January, and February, it can be uncomfortable in the open sun during the middle of the day, but the nights are generally cool. There are two rainy seasons here, the "long rains" from March until the middle or end of May and the "short rains" from late November to early January. For the rest of the year, the skies are usually sunny and clear. The rainfall has averaged 39.31 inches over the past 36 years, about the same as Boston.

Before 1958, Mwanza was the provincial headquarters for the huge Lake Province which stretched from Uganda to Kenya. In 1958, the British created the West Lake Province from the western third of the old Lake Province and last July, the new African Government, for political reasons, divided what was left into three regions (in 1962 Provinces became Regions and Districts, Areas) of Mwanza, Mara and Shinyanga. The new Mwanza Region has four Areas; Mwanza, Geita, Kwimba and the island of Ukerewe.

Mwanza Area is divided into Mwanza Rural, which is in turn split into divisions and sub-divisions, and Mwanza Urban. A district Council consisting of 41 members who meet not less than three times a year and who are elected annually, runs Mwanza Rural. It operates 17 primary schools and is responsible for local roads and health services, getting its finances from a tax of \$7.00 on the head of every family under its jurisdiction. Following the English system, a Town Council manages the affairs of Mwanza Urban. Each of the town's eight wards elects three councillors, one third of whom are re-elected each year. The Councillors choose a chairman and a vice-chairman, while the chief executive officer and administrative officer, the Town Clerk, is appointed by the Local Government Service Commission in Dar es Salaam. Tanu (the Tanganyika African National Union) the one party of this one party state, has a firm grip on the Town Council and on political affairs throughout the Region. The Chairman of the Town Council who is also Regional Chairman of Tanu, a member of the District Council, and a member of the party's National Executive, makes sure that only Tanu members are elected as Councillors. Two taxes support the Council; a site rate, paid at 3% of the improved value of any

land held under a right of Occupancy that exceeds five years, and a yearly urban house tax which ranges from \$14 to \$28 depending on what ward the taxpayer lives in.

Although the Town Council supports seven schools with these revenues, missions provide most of the educational facilities in both the Urban and Rural areas. The Area Education Officer estimates that three-quarters of the school children go to Roman Catholic schools, the rest attending schools run by the African Inland Mission, the Seventh Day Adventists, or by Tapa (the Tanganyikan African Parents Association) which took over Tanu schools in 1961.

The inhabitants of the Mwanza area, the Sukuma, are Bantu cultivators and stock owners who came here from unknown regions to the east and south about 200 years ago. Later, the Bahima, tall and graceful Hamitic immigrants from the northwest, moved into Sukumaland and gradually became intergrated with the Sukuma, accepting their language and customs.

Arab and Swahili traders from the Coast established trade routes into the Lake Victoria Basin in the first part of the nineteenth century and set up a trading post at the Sukuma village of Mwanza. As their trade expanded during the reign of Sultan Bargash (1870-88) they built dhows and used Mwanza as a port for Uganda goods.

The first European to reach Mwanza was the explorer John Hanning Speke who, on 3 August 1858, spied Lake Victoria from an Arab village just west of the present town. But it was not until 25 years later that Europeans actually moved into the area, when, in 1883, the White Fathers built one of the first mission stations in East Africa at Bukumbi, 22 miles outside today's town boundary. Emin Pasha, the slight, myopic German doctor turned Muslim and then explorer, reached Bukumbi in 1890 in the course of his fatal trip to the Congo and broke up the Arab slave trade in the surrounding area.

Tanganyika officially became a protectorate of the young German Empire on 1 April 1891 and, a year later, the commandant at Bukoba on the western shore of the Lake, Captain Langheld, sent a Sergeant Major Hoffman to set up a station at Mwanza, thus beginning the Town's modern history. The Germans quickly saw the utility of Mwanza as a port, but their first attempt to float a steamer on the Lake ended in disaster; it sank during its launching in 1895. They succeeded the following year and by the beginning of the first World War, the Nyanza Navigation Company had three steamers and several small boats cruising the Lake waters. In these early days, the Germans were always short of staff and money - their garrison at Mwanza, which had charge of their entire eastern Lake territory, numbered only five Europeans and 72 Africans in 1896 - but they managed to build a road from Mwanza to the railway line at Tabora and even considered constructing a channel to take water from the

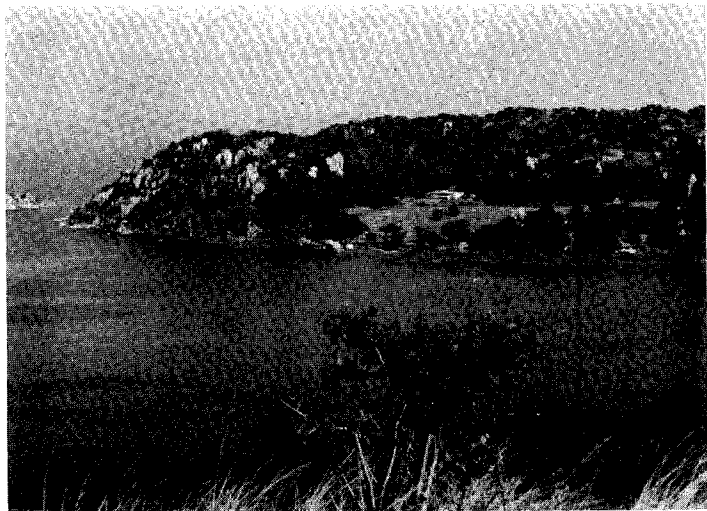
Lake to Itigi, 400 miles away in arid central Tanganyika. In 1902, Mwanza became one of the main bases for the German campaign against sleeping sickness, and four years later one of the researchers, Dr. F.M. Kliene, reported that the town contained 20,000 people, a surprising contrast to the figure of 13,670 given in the Tanganyika Handbook fifty years afterwards.

During the first World War, Mwanza was an important target as the largest Lake port and because of its powerful radio transmitter. By the time the British forces under Brigadier General Crewe captured Mwanza after a brief skirmish in July, 1916, the brilliant Colonel von Lettow Vorbeck had already begun his steady southward withdrawal and Mwanza saw no more action during the War.

After the War, Tanganyika became a class B mandate of the League of Nations under the control of Britain. Unlike the Kilimanjaro, Tanga, and Usumbara areas, few Germans settled in Mwanza, so the change here was merely one of administrative personnel. There was a flurry of excitement in the early 1920s with the discovery of gold at nearby Geita and again, a year or two later, with controversy surrounding the building of a railroad line from Tabora to Mwanza, connecting the Lake with the coast. Kenyans, led by Lord Delamere, opposed the line because they feared that it would deprive the Kenya railroad of its profits from hauling Lake produce. Sir Donald Cameron, the Governor of Tanganyika, snorted the objections aside and the line reached Mwanza in 1928.

The depression of the thirties reduced to nothing what limited funds Britain had for Tanganyika's development and Mwanza suffered with the rest of the country. However, the economy of Tanganyika revived with the second World War. The demand it created for her sisal, cotton and coffee remained when the War ended and the country became a Trust Territory of the United Nations under the continuing administration of the British.

In the post-war period, with the growth of the cotton industry, Mwanza became one of Tanganyika's most prosperous towns. Without cotton Mwanza would be merely another dusty, listless administrative center. But the Lake Victoria area produces 90% of Tanganyika's crop, her second largest export, and because Mwanza is the only railhead in the cotton



A view of the golf course

country, the major Lake port, and the home of the VFCU, it has the highest per capita income in Tanganyika - \$126.00, compared to the national average of \$54.00. The local electricity consumption increases 10% annually without industrial expansion, which suggests that the per capita income figure is also rising.

In the early part of this century the Germans introduced cotton as part of their attempt to make Tanganyika a paying colony. They distributed seeds to the local Africans, and, according to an old resident, actually forced them to plant it. But it was not until after the second World War, with the organization of the industry into cooperatives, that cotton became profitable on a large scale. "In the late forties and early fifties," the first annual report of the VFCU says, "the farmers were generally at the mercy of the (Asian) traders. The system of marketing was so bad that the farmers, after selling their produce, went home with very little in return." Thus, in 1948 and 1949, some growers organized themselves into groups and bought scales so they could verify the weights the Asian buyers gave them. The first primary cooperative societies were formed three years later and soon grouped themselves into cooperative unions. Then in May, 1955, the VFCU, the third and highest level of the cooperative system, came into being with the combination of the unions. At the latest count, there are 455 primary societies with 174,250 members. Above these are 19 cooperative unions, one for each ginnery. Combined, these 19 comprise the VFCU. The growers plant in November and December before the rains and begin picking the cotton towards the end of June when the buying season starts. They then take their crops to the primary societies which pay them (the 1963 prices were \$.07 for a pound of A grade cotton and \$.032 per pound of the B grade) and bag and store the cotton until trucks from one of the Unions take it to a ginnery. The ginneries separate the seed from the lint; the seed goes to mills which extract the oil in it, while the Lint and Seed Marketing Board sends the lint by rail to the auctions in Dar es Salaam.

The VFCU now owns eight of these ginneries and will buy at least two a year from the remaining Asian ginners until it owns all 19. Its other main functions are to set the overall marketing policy for its members, to provide them with credit with money borrowed from the new Cooperative Bank of Tanganyika, and to manage the 150 tractors it owns for its members' use. In addition to having a monopoly on the marketing of all Tanganyika's Lake-area cotton, it markets the entire hedge sisal (sisal used as a hedge or as a boundary line as opposed to plantation sisal) and paddy (unmilled rice) crops of the surrounding regions. These various operations have made the VFCU the biggest business concern in Tanganyika. Last year it had a gross income of more than \$28,000,000.

Although cotton dominates the agriculture of the area to the point of imbalance, several other crops are grown here. The annual report of the Regional Agricultural Officer lists as "main crops" cashew nuts, cassava, coffee, maize, oil seeds, paddy, pulses, sisal, sorghum, and sweet potatoes. Of these, the only cash crops are coffee, maize, paddy and sisal.

Besides the ginneries, oil mills and a plant that makes metal containers for cotton oil, there are few industries in or around Mwanza; some sisal and rice processing factories, two bottling plants, a tire retreading firm and a few woodworking shops. Minerals have been found nearby -- gold at Geita and the famous Williamson Diamond Mines near Shinyanga, 100 miles to the south -- but the gold mine will shut down in two years and what benefits Mwanza gets from the Williamson mine come more from the supplies she sends there rather than diamonds.

There is also a fishing industry, which, since the introduction of outboard motors a few years ago, is gradually becoming mechanized. Mwanza's 849 fishermen caught seven tons of fish in 1963, most of which was sold locally because there are no refrigeration facilities here. Some smoked fish, however, is sent inland or to Uganda.

Sukumaland contains over a million head of cattle, but, at the moment, they are an untapped resource. Because their milk is thin and they are underfed, their main commercial value comes from their skins.

Since Tanganyika's Independence, many countries have come to examine investment possibilities in Mwanza: Communist China, France, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Russia, the Scandinavian countries, the United States, West Germany, and Yugoslavia have all sent delegations here. So far, French and Italian oil companies have put money into Mwanza, (as they have throughout Kenya); the Scandinavian countries, through the Nordic mission, plan to build a fish receiving station which will contain a freezing plant with a capacity of 14 tons, the Japanese are building a fish net factory and there is talk of a West German textile plant, but other countries have merely stayed in town a few days, asked questions, and left.

Mwanza has several attractions for the prospective investors, the most important of which is that the heavily populated Lake Basin is the biggest market in East Africa. Also, raw materials are easily available in the case of fish, leathersgoods, tanning or textile plants and there is an abundant labor supply. In addition, investors like the low minimum monthly wage in Tanganyika, (\$17.50 in the urban areas) and the stability of labor since the amalgamation of all unions into the government's National Union of Tanganvika Workers -- or, some cynics say, since the jailing of union leaders after the mutiny in January. Furthermore, Lake and rail transportation facilities are good; there are three steamers that go around the lake, and, if a manufacturer wants to ship goods by rail, he can send them to Dar es Salaam by the Mwanza-Tabora line or to the Kenya port of Mombasa, via Lake steamer and the railhead at Kisumu.

Yet, up to now, the disadvantages of investing here have outweighed the advantages. The enquiring investors have complained about the cost of power, the education, health and recreation facilities, and, not suprisingly, about the risk of putting money into a poor country of uncertain stability.

The tourist industry seems one of the best ways for Tanganyika to make money, but so far there has been little in Mwanza that appeals to tourists. However, with the opening in July of a small game park

on a ninety-five acre island next to the town called Saa Nane (eight o'clock) Mwanza will have its first tourist attraction. For a shilling, visitors will be able to walk along unfenced paths through a miniature Serengeti which eventually will contain at least one example of every non-dangerous wild animal in Tanganyika. Those who want to look at the more dangerous species; buffalo, elephant, and rhinoceros, will be able to see them in pens. The Game Department realizes that the island is not big enough to rival the internationally famous game parks such as Ngorongoro Crater, but it hopes to attract passengers from the steamers as well as East Africans on safari and Mwanza residents, all of whom can picnic there or spend the night in one of the island's rest houses.

Like the other towns in East Africa, Mwanza has three main racial groups; Africans, Asians and Europeans. The 1957 census listed 15,241 Africans, but the present figure is about 20,000. The Secretary of the local Kanu (Kenya African National Union) club estimates that 6,000 of these people are Kenyans, most of whom, as one would expect, are Luos from the Lake shore. There are also just under a hundred Kikuyu businessmen, who control a large section of the town market. Most of the remaining fourteen thousand Africans are members of the local Sukuma tribes, but there are also some Haya people from Bukoba on the western shore of the Lake and some Wanyamwezi, southern relatives of the Sukuma who with them constitute the largest tribal group in Tanganyika, over 1,500,000 people.

A recent survey of African employment in the town produced these approximate figures: 53% of the Africans here were unskilled laborers; 15% were skilled workers such as masons or mechanics; 7% were "professionals"; teachers or skilled clerks; 18% were classified as "miscellaneous", for example, petty-traders and the self-employed; and 7% were unemployed.

The changes that Independence has brought the lives of most of Mwanza's residents have not been significant. Wages have gone up, but not everyone has a job. People still go to football games and drink beer with their friends, and except for the political speeches and the Tanu Land Rovers with their loudspeakers, life ticks along pretty much the way it used to.

There are even some people here who will tell you, not very loudly to be sure, that there was actually less restriction in the old days. The British line between politics and administration vanished with the assignment of politically-appointed Regional and Area Commissioners, and many civil servants resent the political interference with their work that has often followed. Also, the detainments that came after the mutiny in January and, more recently, after the President's visit to neighboring Musoma, made many realize that they had better keep to themselves whatever opinions they have that run counter to the Government's. As a result, there is not much political discussion among the Africans here.

The Asians, Mwanza's second largest racial community, numbered 3,886 in 1957; now, the estimated Asian population is 8,000. Roughly speaking, 45% of these are Hindus, 35% Isamilis, 13% are members of the Muslim Ithna'ashri sect, 5% are Sikhs, and 2% are Goans. As in other

East African towns (see JS-13) the Asians here dominate commerce, and although business seems to be good, they are far more worried about the future than their counterparts in Kenya. Several local Asians have told me that most of their colleagues have sent all the money they could out of Tanganyika and are operating on as little capital and as much borrowed money as possible. Few Asians mentioned this to me in Nairobi.

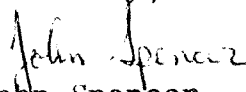
The communal divisions among the Asians are, on the other hand, just as distinct here as elsewhere, for each group clings to its own religious and recreational habits. There is one common Asian athletic facility, the Mwanza Sports Club, but its activities are limited to tennis and cards and its membership is not large.

The last of the three significant racial communities in Mwanza, the European, consists of some 500 people including missionaries. Before Independence in 1961, most Europeans here worked for Government, but now there are none left there except a few in the technical aspects of agriculture, fisheries, health, the judiciary, railroads and the veterinary services. The British commercial community, in contrast, has not changed much except for the normal transfers and retirements, but there has been a steady influx of new people in other fields. There are American Peace Corps volunteers, Israeli agriculturalists, Italian construction workers, Dutch business advisors, and assorted Frenchmen and Scandinavians, with the result that Mwanza has much more of a cosmopolitan flavor than it did in British days. What social life there is centers around "The Club", a run-down, one-storey building surrounded by a small nine hole golf course, three tennis courts and a swimming pool. With the exception of three Africans, whom one rarely sees, and twelve Asians, the membership is entirely European. The former Regional Secretary, the last Englishman to leave the Regional Administration, tried to get more Africans to join, but without success. He found that although the majority of the Europeans talk about the good relations that exist between them and Africans, a good many really didn't want Africans in the Club. (Actually, this is no hardship for the Africans who find it expensive and feel out of place there). There are, however, some Europeans who worry that unless more Africans become members, the Regional authorities will take the Club over the way the Central Government seized the Dar es Salaam Club. Still, most of the members seem to be glad to let things stay just the way they are.

There has been a definite change in attitude among the Europeans since Independence. Those who still work for the Government can no longer consider it a career because of the pressures of Africanization. Instead, they are on two-year contracts which may or may not be renewed and their attitude is a short-timer's one; they do their work conscientiously but without spirit.

The remaining inhabitants of Mwanza are Arabs, descendants of the old slave traders, a small group of Somalis, some half-castes, and, strangely enough, two Chinamen.

Sincerely,


John Spencer