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Dear Mr. Nolte:

Basutoland, less than 12,000 square miles in size, may become the first independent African nation south of Tanganyika and the Congo. A British protectorate, its evolution toward self-government was extremely slow until a few years ago. Now things are moving so swiftly that "evolution" no longer seems to be the proper term. Two years ago a constitution was put into operation which gave the Basuto the vote, the right to elect members to District Councils and the National Legislature and the authority to govern more directly their own affairs. Already a new constitution is being drafted on which

full self-government can be based. Independence will not likely come until the new constitution is accepted and elections are held, probably in 1964. The Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), the country's strongest political power, is strongly urging an accelerated schedule but, if the British heed the advice of the other political groups, full independence will only come after the Basuto have had at least a year's experience with the new constitution. It is difficult to predict just what the actual time-table will be. Whenever independence comes, however, Basutoland will be unique among nations.

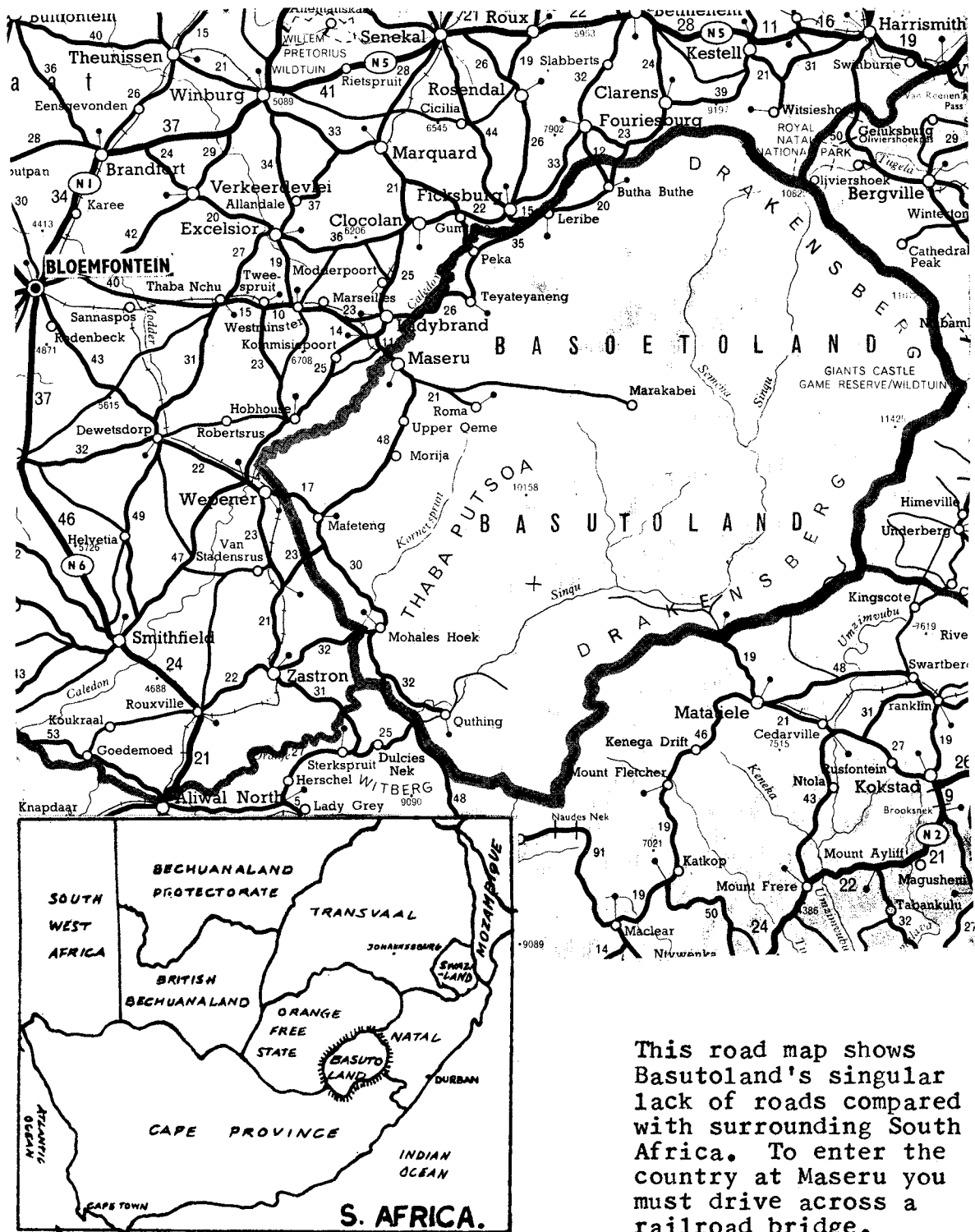
This will not be the Basuto's first experience in self-government. During most of the 19th Century they were an independent unified tribal nation under the wise leadership of Moshesh (Chief Moshoeshe). They gave this up in 1868 in order to gain the protection of the British Government against the further encroachment of White settlers on their land. Since that time they have carefully guarded their territorial rights. With the help of the British they successfully opposed their inclusion in the Union of South Africa when it was formed in 1908 and, while they welcomed missionaries, teachers, traders and British government employees, they have not allowed any permanent land rights to pass into the hands of the White man (with the exception of a grant to an early Protestant mission). As an independent nation with little White infiltration they will be Southern Africa's most completely Black African state, thus eliminating many problems inherent in establishing a multi-racial government.

But they will be in the geographical center of Africa's most White-dominated state, South Africa. The distinction of being the world's only land-locked nation totally engulfed by another poses problems no other emergent nation has had to face. Many Black Africans in South Africa hope that the Basuto will succeed in governing themselves but the South African government is not anxious to have an uncontrollable source of Black Nationalism within its borders.

What chance for stability?

The possibility of responsible self-government in Basutoland, democratically based and economically stable, is slight. It will take great coordination, much assistance (and the willingness to accept such assistance) and considerable luck.

The Basuto are considered much more politically conscious than Africans in other areas in that they love to talk politics. However only a few have the education and political experience necessary to contend with the serious problems which an independent Basutoland will face.



For most of the 90 years the British have governed Basutoland through the traditional tribal system, relying on the Paramount Chief and other chiefs to carry out most of the local administration. There has been no initiative to break with this tradition and prepare the people for going it alone. It is only recently that the goal of the British to govern the country without too much disruption and disharmony has become impossible to carry out within the traditional framework. Rapid progress toward the establishment of a popular franchise has become necessary. It has been only in the last five or six years that the Basuto have had the opportunity to participate in elections, hold office and share with the chiefs the management of their local affairs. Africanization of the Government's public service, in the past dominated by White British civil servants, is a recent thing. There is now a legislative committee to keep an eye on Governmental vacancies and prepare Basuto replacements in advance. The British favor this process because it allows each Basuto to gain some experience before taking the full responsibility of a senior post and it allows the White official to finish his tour of duty without disruption.

Members of the BCP believe this is not fast enough; the pace is too much determined by when White officials give up their positions rather than when there is a qualified Basuto to take their place. They feel the Basuto needs political and administrative experience as quickly as possible and they demand that more White-held senior posts be given over now.

British officials, reluctantly resigned to independence, work toward dis-establishing themselves without any enthusiasm. They realize more than anyone the immensity of the problems which will face this small state and the difficulties involved in solving them without sufficient funds, skilled men and the full cooperation of the people. They believe independence will come before the country is ready for it. And they realize there is nothing they can do to halt or decelerate the inevitable.

Land of light and shadow

From a distance the mountains of Basutoland hold the promise of a Shangri-la. Isolated from the rest of the world by poor roads, the country boasts invigoratingly clear air, healthy climate (cold in winter, refreshingly cool in summer) and breathtaking scenery. The colorful blankets and distinctively woven Basuto hats, the friendliness of the people, the abundance of game and fish could make this a tourist's paradise.

But on closer inspection the inspiring natural beauty and color contrasts sharply with the poverty of the people. Three-quarters



of them live agriculturally congested on the rolling lowlands (5000 to 6000 feet) which run north and south to the west of the ridge of mountains in a width varying from ten to forty miles. In this lowland region are all the major roads and they are primitive to say the least. The only tarred road runs through the town of Maseru where it was laid a few years ago for the arrival of the Queen. The rich mineral deposits in the mountains can only be reached by helicopter or airplane. Jeeps penetrate the mountain areas as far as they are able and then pack trains pick up the goods for the trading stores. It is almost impossible to enter Basutoland from Natal as the mountains defining the border rise straight to some 10,000 feet or more.

Erosion is so prevalent it appears a natural part of the landscape; gorges wide enough for a four lane highway, 15 to 25 feet deep, and slits some twenty feet deep descend from every hill and mountain and cut unobstructed across the plains.

And the landscape is expressive of the Basuto's physical condition. As this picturesque country is distorted and impoverished by erosion, so these handsome people are victimized by poverty and the lack of proper food. A recent survey estimated that 80% of the children that live to ten years have suffered from the effects of malnutrition at least once.

In order for a Basuto family to gain an adequate minimum subsistence from the land the present average holding of 5.7 acres should be doubled or production of crops and the quality of the livestock tremendously improved. In order to do this one-half the families in the lowlands, about 250,000 people, would have to be moved.

Efforts have been made to improve the land and the cattle and more especially the living conditions of the people as far as the resources



Basuto miner

of the Government permit. However the overall problems become increasingly serious as the population expands. Although the infant mortality rate is still high it is being lowered by a gradual increase in medical care, and this has helped the Basuto to increase at a faster rate than ever before. Since 1956 the Basuto population has increased by over 80,000 people, from 790,000 to over 870,000, a rate of growth that had previously taken ten years to accomplish (1946-56).

Additional income is badly needed. A total of 100 are employed in a brick factory and by mission printing presses. Handicraft shops now under development will employ a few more. No other industry exists. Thus 200,000 Basuto, one-half of the adult working males, are always away in the South African gold, diamond and coal mines or on Orange Free State farms. Without this income from outside of the country most families could not survive.

The Basutoland Government, even with its present limited administrative budget, cannot exist on its income from taxes, custom duties, exports of mohair, fine wool and beans.

Last year, out of an administrative budget of about \$9 million, the British Government gave almost \$3,400,000 not including extra grants and aids.

And this subsidized budget does not meet the growing needs of the country. Money is needed desparately for expansion of agricultural betterment schemes, educational facilities (most education is now provided by mission schools with the financial help and direction of the Government), and for educating more and better teachers. Money is needed for capital improvements such as roads, housing, public utilities and the development of water resources and electric power, all vitally necessary if industry is to be attracted.

Tribal patterns vs. progress

Economic development has been limited by the conservatism of the pastoral and tribal way of life. Before development can progress the Basuto must come to think of cattle as being more important in quality than in quantity; that richness depends more on the price cattle can bring in the market than the number they can count in their kraal. They must think more of the future and plan ahead rather than satisfying only immediate needs. They must consider private or collective ownership of their land in place of occupying land which has been allotted by their chief.

A change in the land tenure system directly affects the chiefs. They are reluctant to give up their authority. Just as individual tribesmen are unable to buy or own land so it is impossible for industry to purchase land from the Paramount Chief through whom all Basuto land is held and allocated. Businessmen insist on purchase rights, or at least long term leases, on any land they will develop. And up to now this has been impossible.

The constitution of 1960 gave the elected District Councils responsibility for the maintenance and the application of certain land betterment schemes which overlapped the authority of the chiefs who control the land. Clashes between the two forces are fairly common. Their relationship is further strained because the Councils, centers of non-traditional political power, are the electoral colleges from which 40 members are elected to the 80 seat National Legislative Council.

In the 1960 election 73 of the 162 District Council seats were won by the BCP, 22 by the Basutoland Nationalist Party (BNP), 15 by the Marema Tlou ("union is strength") Party and 51 by independents. These representatives then elected 30 Congress Party members to the National Legislative Council along with 5 Marema Tlou, 1 Nationalist and 4 independents. The other 40 seats are held by chiefs and

members appointed by the Paramount Chief, plus a few British civil servants. With one-half of the Legislative Council fixed with non-elected members and the Executive Council made up of four British officials, an appointee of the Paramount Chief and only three members elected by the Legislative Council (none of whom belong to the BCP) there is considerable check on non-traditional measures.

Basutoland Congress Party - giant on the left



Ntsu Mokhehle

Ntsu Mokhehle, head of the well-organized pan-African BCP, finds the whole arrangement unjust. He claims his party represents the Basuto people more legitimately than do the chiefs and the British who do not have to stand for election. Immediate independence is his primary objective. In his eagerness to prove to the Special UN Committee on Colonial Problems that this is what Basutoland needs he has said some rather harsh things about the British. They are "dishonest", "troublemakers", "contemptuous of the UN Charter"; they "subject the Basuto to repressive measures and torture" and "sell human values" for South African money. However he so mingled fact and fancy that his presentation was quite ineffective. (He confided to one of his aides on return that he wished he had done a better job of

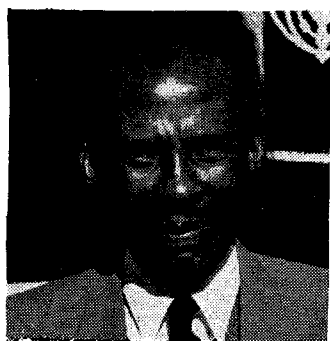
preparation.)

When I asked him a few months ago how he planned to solve his country's economic problems he said there would be no more problems once they had independence. First things come first. The lag in education, road building, employment, etc., would take care of itself. Other nations would flock to help - nations which are now, he assured me, prevented by Britain's domination. Financial help would come from both the United States and Russia since neither would want the other to get ahead. Such aid would be accepted without any attachment to either group. Investments would come from foreigners who are interested in Basutoland's untapped mineral resources. However, everything would be controlled by the Basuto; they would not be the tool of any outside interest.

Mokhehle sees the Basuto quest for independence linked with the emancipation of Africans the world over. He told a large gathering in Maseru on his return from New York that he had received assurances from "many well-to-do Harlem negroes" that they would come to settle in Basutoland once it was independent. He pointed out that they would bring to the country both additional money and professional talent.

He and his party favor a constitution which would provide that the majority of the legislative members be elected and that the Executive Council be more representative. Then the BCP would demonstrate who speaks for the people and who has the right to lead the country. He denies that he is in the pay of the Communists and points to the recent ouster of pro-Communists within his party. Nkrumah and Ghana have been his guiding lights although there now seems to be some disillusionment. He sees the BCP opposed by a host of enemies: the British administrators, Protestant and Catholic clergy, chiefs, Communists and representatives from countries outside who would like to buy influence.

Freedom and Progressive Parties - not off the ground



B.M. Khaketla

B.M. Khaketla, an elected member of the Executive Council, was once a BCP leader who left the party because he disliked its growing antagonism toward the church, the chiefs and the British. He was also opposed to its pro-Communist leanings and he now claims that it receives money from Communist sources. He believes the Freedom Party, which he founded, would do quite well if it had the funds to put full-time political workers in the field. "But, unlike the BCP, our members have other jobs to do." Some months ago on a visit to the United States he tried to raise money for his party by personal visits to the Republican and Democratic Party headquarters. He was unsuccessful.

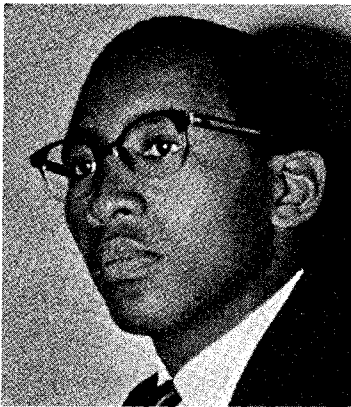
Both his party and the Progressives represent a relatively moderate position in Basutoland politics. Both advocate internal self-government with the continued assistance of the British until responsible government is assured - maybe in a year. They favor a new constitution that would provide for a bi-cameral legislature; the lower house to be elected and to have the major law-making powers, the upper house to be composed of chiefs who would have the right of review. In this way the chiefs would keep much of their traditional prestige. Clashes with the District Councils could be lessened, they believe, if Legislative Council members were elected directly instead of through the present electoral system.

Their greatest fear is that with full independence the BCP will take over the country and crush all White help and any form of democratic government. They feel they can do little with the resources they have and at present their parties have only negligible support.

The Right Wing

Marema Tlou, headed by Chief S.S. Matete, and the Basutoland Nationalist Party, led by Chief Leabua Jonathon, represent the conservative views of the chiefs and form the bulwark of support for the Paramount Chief. Because of this they have greater support from the voters than do the moderates. However they and the moderate parties are closer together than any one of them is to the BCP and if necessary they would cooperate to form an opposition to it. As this is written the Marema Tlou and the Freedom Party have announced their merger and it is expected that the Nationalists will also join them. This consolidated political force should provide the BCP with quite a battle in the next election.

The struggle for power



The real opponents in the battle for power are the Paramount Chief Moshoeshe II, who controls the land, holds the traditional allegiance of the Basuto and wants veto rights over any legislation, and Makhehle, the BCP demagogue, who appeals forcefully to the newly created electorate and who seeks a dominant one-party state. While Mokhehle is a veteran in political affairs since his days as a student at Fort Hare in South Africa, Prince Bereng Seeiso only returned from Oxford to become Paramount Chief in 1960. He is now 24 and has much to learn but he is finding his way quickly.

Paramount Chief He is a Catholic and the church exercises a great deal of influence on him and his followers. Protestants decry this mounting influence in what they feel should be a Protestant nation, and many feel that both churches are assuming undue authority in the affairs of the nation.

These divisions of opinion were emphasized recently when the Paramount Chief married a Protestant girl in the biggest social event in years. Since she would not change her faith the Pope gave special dispensation. Some predict the religiously-divided royal household will cause more disunity than unity. The BCP may take advantage of any religious antagonism but they will have to deal with the churches if they are to win dominance in the country's affairs.

South Africa dominates the scene

There is already a wide-spread rumour that, whoever controls the Government after independence, South Africa plans to move in and



Prince Bereng Seeiso, Paramount Chief Moshoeshe II with his bride

take over the country. They could justify such a step on humane grounds if Basutoland floundered economically - to help the starving people and save a bankrupt government from internal disorder. They would also consider themselves justified if the country were to become a hotbed of anti-apartheid subversion. "Why do you think they are tarring the roads to the Basutoland borders?" I was asked. "Obviously it is to facilitate troop movements." Others deny that South Africa could ever take over. They feel there would be too much world uproar and that the UN would actively step in.

In the meantime friction is building up. An increasing number of South Africans, White and African, banned for their political activities, have been granted asylum. While overt actions on the part of political guests might endanger relations with South Africa most Basutos feel a relatedness with other Africans and the new African states and they will not close their borders to these political refugees.

The Paramount Chief wants a radio station, partly because a commercial station would be a source of revenue and partly because of the tremendous difficulties of communication in this mountainous country. Such a station could beam programs into South Africa (broadcasts from other African states are now being picked up in the Republic more and more) and there is grave concern in South Africa that views expressed over such a station would not fit into the pattern set by the rigidly controlled SABC. Eyebrows are also raised at the suggestion that the Paramount Chief wants a standing army. What smacks of the beginnings of an invasionary force to South Africans is considered important for prestige purposes by the Paramount Chief. Such a force would be his personal armed guard and would also serve to augment in a military way the ordinary police force.

South Africa could ruin Basutoland quite easily without any overt aggression. Periodically there is talk about removing all "foreign natives" from jobs in the Republic. If South African-employed Basutos were to return home there would be chaos; it would be impossible for Basutoland to absorb these men. South Africa could also easily seal Basutoland borders, cutting off their exports and limiting their imports.

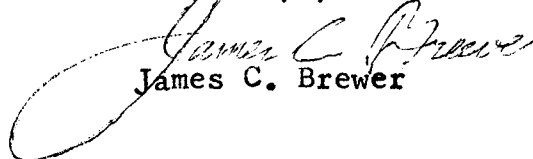
One of the most ambitious projects planned to uplift Basutoland's economy and give employment depends completely on South Africa. Basutoland Factory Estates Development Scheme (BAFED) involves turning 20 acres of ground near Maseru into an Industrial Park. A Commission appointed by the Paramount Chief and responsible to the Legislative Council has authority to lease land up to 50 years to those businesses interested in making an investment. Those interested to date have been almost exclusively South African.

Their second project is an enormous dam (the OxBow Dam) to develop water resources that exist at the 9000 foot level in the mountains on the northeastern border. Lines from such a dam could feed water that would not need filtering into South Africa at a much lower cost than they could get it anywhere else. The Johannesburg reef area will need additional water in a few years and this could be a relatively inexpensive way of supplying it. Electric power could also be developed and sold cheaply to South Africa. This project would give a terrific boost to the Basutoland economy. However it would do them little good without South Africa as a recipient.

If Basutoland were a part of South Africa there would be no problem about this kind of development. Some officials have intimated that under the South African government such projects would already be under way. A prominent White businessman in Basutoland feels strongly that the country could make more progress and solve all its economic problems easily if it were incorporated into South Africa.

Be that as it may, the Basutos are determined to go it alone.

Sincerely yours,



James C. Brewer

Pictures courtesy Basutoland Information Service