



BOOKED FOR TRAVEL

Edited by Horace Sutton

The Swazis Prepare for the "Inde-pen-dance"

SWAZILAND, smallest country in southern Africa—a landlocked, 6,700-square-mile territory, with its Janus-like, two-headed profile facing the Republic of South Africa on the west and Portuguese East Africa on the east—will be the last of the three British protectorates in Africa to achieve independence. The other two, Botswana (formerly Bechuanaland) and Lesotho (formerly Basutoland), became independent last year. Swaziland's deadline is no later than 1969, but *inde-pen-dance*, the newest word in the Swazi language, is expected to take place much sooner.

Swaziland has traveled a long and tortuous road. A mixture of the numerous clans who settled south of the Great Usutu River several centuries ago, the Swazis have been united as a distinct tribe since the early nineteenth century. But their fortunes have been diverse, in no small measure due to the diversity of tribal leaders, particularly the Paramount Chief—the *Ngwenyama*, or Lion, as he is called.

There was the proud, resolute Mswazi, who promoted the amalgamation of the clans and who left his name as a legacy to his nation. There was the shrewd, diplomatic Sobhuza I, who, having lost out to a neighboring king in a sanguinary difference of opinion over possession of lands, settled the feud and regained the lands by marrying his enemy's daughter. And there was the impolitic, perplexed Mbandzeni, who entangled his country's affairs by granting concessions to foreigners for practically everything of value in the land of the Swazis.

The effects of Mbandzeni's giveaway era a century ago are still very much in evidence today. Although at first the Boer and British white settlers had been welcomed as allies by the Swazis in their chronic hostilities with the bellicose Zulus, later the Boers and Britons aggressively intrigued to acquire rights to Swazi land, minerals, administrative posts, revenue collection, and even refreshment rights on an unbuilt railway. In the end, all of the Swazi lands and

mineral rights, to the last spadeful, were signed away. Today more than half the land area still remains in foreign hands, much of it precious arable tracts being used by absentee landlords in South Africa for the winter grazing of their sheep. In an extraordinary national effort to redeem their land, however, the Swazi people since 1946 have been contributing voluntarily to a fund called *Lifa* to buy back land placed on the market by non-Swazi owners.

It is a breathtakingly lovely land. Traveling through the green-carpeted hills near the capital, Mbabane, one is enthralled by craggy blue mountain peaks on the horizon, the undulating emerald hills, seamed and severed by river valleys and ravines. On the hillsides, Swazi farmers in traditional wrap-around clothing, some wearing baboon skins, till the soil in wavy furrows descending like staircases down the slopes. On the highway, past the bright red- and blue-roofed houses of the Ngwenya ironminers, kilt-clad youngsters hawk crude wooden handicrafts to passing motorists. If their hand-carved giraffes or zebras are refused, the sad-faced children beg, "... five cents, please, to buy school books."

PARALLEL to the road runs the shiny new Swaziland Railway, first surveyed in 1865, and at long last constructed 100 years later. Mainly used for hauling iron ore out to the Indian Ocean port of Lourenço Marques in Mozambique, the line will soon have spurs operating to coal mines and cotton ginneries. This vital cross-country transport link has given one of the most important boosts to the country's economic growth.

Mbabane more resembles an English village than the capital of a land of 300,000 people. Picturesquely nestled in a valley beneath the backdrop of the Mdimba mountain range, the town has an abundance of churches, a diminutive Main Street, and a population of 9,000. Scattered around the town "center," side by side with government administration offices, are a few shops, general supply stores, two or three restaurants, a prison, and the Consulate of the United States, one of the few countries with diplomatic representation here. A public information display on the sidewalk hailing "Cotton as a Major Crop" carries strongly patriotic overtones. More concrete preparations for future independence are in evidence also. A Staff Training Institute to prepare civil servants and

administrators has been opened, and the capital boasts a gleaming new post office. But postal authorities in Swaziland have a peculiar problem: The country must become better known in the world, since a sizable quantity of incoming mail gets misdirected to Switzerland.

About midway between Mbabane and the "Second City" of Manzini lies the royal village of Lozita, residence of the *Ngwenyama*, Sobhuza II. The sixty-seven-year-old ruler, who also holds the title of Commander of the British Empire, has been the Paramount Chief since 1921. A popular sovereign with a dignified and democratic manner, Sobhuza II appears equally distinguished whether elegantly dressed in a tailcoat and top hat for an official function, or in full native regalia, carrying *assegai* and shield, accepting a gift from a tribesman. As the *Ngwenyama*, he is advised on tribal matters by lesser chiefs and VIPs in a Privy Council, and by his mother, the *Ndlovukazi*, who holds an exalted position within the royal household. And finally—and democratically enough—he may be consulted by any adult Swazi male.

Probably the world's longest-reigning monarch (forty-six years), Sobhuza II has now been officially designated "King of Swaziland" and recognized as head of state by the interim constitution which goes into effect shortly. Under a Swazi-British agreement, Swaziland will be a "protected state," having a ministerial form of government modeled after the British system, with a prime minister, cabinet, and bicameral parliament. During this transition period, and afterward in an independent Swaziland, the *Ngwenyama* as king will exert an authority similar to that of British monarchs.

All roads lead to Manzini, the commercial, agricultural, and industrial center of Swaziland. Manzini has a population of only 8,000, but, unlike Mbabane, appears to have twice that number at first glance. Swazis who come here to shop, to work, to visit from all regions of the country appear in many variations of native dress, ornamented with beads, feathers, and earrings, each one carrying something: a dozing, papoosed child, a head-borne cooking pot, a squawking chicken, or the ubiquitous carved knobstick. The throngs stroll by—Swazi women in wrap-around styles with "magni" skirts that reach for the ankles (mini-skirts are worn only by teen-agers who have grown too fast); Swazi males strutting in their printed cotton wrap-around skirts; infants and small children frisking about most often in no skirts at all. Along the highway leading to the city is Swaziland's newest showplace—the first casino in southern Africa. With a splendid sixty-room hotel attached, and adorned with a color-splashed garden of orchids, azaleas, and bougainvillea, it is a powerful attrac-

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