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Background Briefing No. 3, 1980

## BOTSWANA AFTER SIR SERETSE KHAMA

### Basic Information on Botswana

#### Constitutional status

Independent Republic since 30 September 1966

#### Population

830 000, composed of six indigenous tribes:

Bakgatla, Bakwena, Bamalete, Bamangwato, Bangwaketse and Batawana

#### Area

600 372 sq. km.

#### Economy

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): P298,2 million<sup>+</sup>

Gold and Foreign Currency Reserves: \$ US 237,75 million

(<sup>+</sup>P=Pula. Exchange rate: R1 = P1,0135)

### Political background

The Bechuanaland Protectorate on 30 September 1966 became the independent Republic of Botswana. The British handed over power to the Democratic Party Government of Sir Seretse Khama, which had won 28 of the 31 seats in elections for the National Assembly held in March 1965. Under the independence constitution Sir Seretse, previously Prime Minister, assumed the post of President and thus became both head of the Government and of the State.

Since independence, Botswana has enjoyed a remarkable degree of political stability and has firmly adhered to its democratic constitution. Botswana today is a rare African example of a truly democratic state in the respect it shows for

civil liberties and the multi-party system. The country has established a reputation as one committed to a tolerant non-racial society and has also developed a strongly capitalist economy. Sir Seretse's Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), a middle-of-the-road populist party, is the embodiment of these values. In the general elections of 1969, 1974 and 1979 it was returned to power with overwhelming victories. The results of the most recent elections, held in October 1979, are as follows:

	<u>Leader</u>	<u>Votes</u>	<u>Seats</u>		
			<u>1979</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1969</u> <sup>+</sup>
Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)	Sir Seretse Khama	100 398	29	27	24
Botswana National Front (BNF)	Dr Kenneth Koma	17 480	2	2	3
Botswana People's Party (BPP)	Mr Philip Matante	9 983	1	2	3
Botswana Independence Party (BIP)	Mr Motsami Mpho	5 057	0	1	1

The outcome of the 1979 general election is important for a number of reasons. First, Sir Seretse's BDP won two more seats, one of which is in Francistown, a traditional opposition stronghold. The BDP had in fact previously made vigorous yet unsuccessful attempts to establish a foothold in the important commercial centre of Francistown. The 1979 election means that the BDP has at least succeeded in strengthening its urban base. Second, the leftist pro-Marxist BNF totally failed to make good its sweeping claims of unseating the BDP. Sir Seretse was no doubt relieved at the BNF's poor performance, since the Government has been perturbed by the BNF's radicalising influence on the country's youth. The BNF cannot, however, be dismissed because it in fact increased its vote from 11,6% in 1974 to 12,9%, whereas the BDP's share of the vote went down from 78% in 1974 to 75%. The BIP, whose leader is a former member of the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, lost its single seat and seems to be a spent force. The BPP, left with a single seat, is Botswana's first truly modern and nationalist political party (formed in 1960) and it initially had strong links with exiled members of South Africa's Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC). Third, the voter turn-out of 60% was a significant improvement on the 33% poll in 1974 and 51% in 1969. In this sense the BDP also campaigned successfully against what was a growing trend of voter apathy. The election outcome confirmed that Botswana is a de facto one party state, but Sir Seretse always remained firmly committed to Botswana's democratic multi-party system and showed no desire to declare a de jure one party state.

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<sup>+</sup>The number of elected seats in the National Assembly was increased by one after the 1969 election.

### The succession

Since Botswana's record of democracy, domestic tranquility and development was so closely identified with the late President, doubts about the continuation of this state of affairs are bound to be expressed.

The Botswana National Assembly will meet on Friday, 18 July 1980, to elect the new president. This procedure for electing the president only applies if the presidency falls vacant in the life of the National Assembly, which is elected for five years. Normally, the election of the president is linked with the general election of the 32 members of the National Assembly. If there is more than one candidate for the office of president, each candidate for election to the National Assembly must declare which presidential candidate he supports. The presidential candidate who attracts the votes of more than 50% of the candidates elected to the Assembly, becomes president. The president holds office for the duration of the National Assembly.

The most likely successor to Sir Seretse seems to be Dr Quett K J Masire, the Vice-President (and now Acting President) and Minister of Finance and Development Planning. Dr Masire's claim to the leadership is further strengthened by his position as Secretary-General of the BDP and he enjoys a reputation as an able administrator. Groomed in Botswana's democratic tradition, Dr Masire, a former journalist and the holder of an honorary doctorate, was a close confidant and loyal supporter of Sir Seretse and has served in the Cabinet since independence. Two factors may, however, count against Dr Masire. First, he belongs to one of the minority tribes, the Bangwaketse (whereas Sir Seretse belonged to the dominant Bamangwato tribe). Second, he long lacked a strong popular base despite his position in the BDP. In the 1969 election Dr Masire lost his seat in the Assembly (but served as one of the 4 nominated members) and in 1974 returned as an elected member although by a narrow majority. In last year's election, he however retained his seat with a comfortable majority.

If Dr Masire were to be opposed for the presidency, a likely challenger is Mr Archie M Mogwe, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Also a member of the Bangwaketse tribe, Mr Mogwe was only appointed to the Cabinet (and in his present portfolio) after the 1974 general election. A former university-trained civil servant, he enjoys a public standing which probably derives in large measure from the high "visibility" of his portfolio in recent years,

given the Rhodesian war and Botswana's role as a Frontline state.

In the longer run, Brigadier Ian Khama, second-in-command of the Botswana Defence Force and son of Sir Seretse, may well become a figure to be reckoned with in the political arena. Although the 28 year old Brigadier Khama is a professional soldier in the British mould (and British trained) and has studiously kept out of politics, he has recently been installed as Chief of the majority Bamangwato tribe and this influential position could in future prove a useful political stepping stone.<sup>+</sup>

Whoever is in the meantime elected to succeed Sir Seretse - and Dr Masire must be considered the front-runner - the chances are that it will be a smooth transition, owing to Botswana's firmly established democratic tradition. It can also be expected that the new president will to a large extent continue Sir Seretse's policies both at home and abroad.

#### Some problem areas

Botswana's new president can consider himself fortunate taking office in a climate of relative peace on the country's frontiers. During the past decade, Botswana's major preoccupation was undoubtedly the escalating guerrilla war in Rhodesia. Despite its nominal neutrality, Botswana got drawn into the conflict in several ways : ZIPRA guerrillas (supporting Mr Joshua Nkomo) used Botswana as a springboard for attacks on Rhodesia, resulting in severe Rhodesian reprisals; several thousand Rhodesian refugees settled in Botswana; and as a member of the five Frontline African states, Botswana was actively involved in the search for a Rhodesian settlement. Now that the war has ended and Mr Robert Mugabe has been installed as Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, a major burden on Botswana's resources and indeed a threat to its security have been removed.

There are, however, a number of domestic problem areas facing the incoming president - some of which have been referred to as "potential storm centres". First, there is growing discontent with insufficient rural development. The Government has admitted its shortcomings in this regard and consequently earmarked over half the investment envisaged in the 1976-81 National Development Plan for agriculture, education, health and transport.

Second, the Rhodesian war has caused a considerable degree of racial friction between whites and blacks, particularly in the border town of Francistown which

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<sup>+</sup>Being under 30, Brigadier Khama cannot now be elected President, in terms of the Constitution.

has long been something of a preserve of white affluence and exclusiveness. In an effort to remove Batswana resentment against these socio-economic discrepancies, the Government introduced legislation to close down racially exclusive associations and to ensure employment preference and obligatory training opportunities for Batswana. It is official policy to reserve senior jobs in the police for "citizens of the country by birth". The year 1990 has also been set as the target date for Botswana to reach self-sufficiency in executive manpower. In future, the state of race relations will no doubt be heavily influenced by the economic position of the Batswana vis-à-vis whites living in Botswana.

Third, mining developments, particularly at Selebi-Pikwe, meant an influx of expatriate whites who, it has been alleged, abuse Batswana labourers, and thus cause renewed racial friction. Mining has also produced some labour disputes, with Batswana miners striking for wage parity with South African miners. The Botswana Government is, however, committed to prevent the emergence of a new working class of Batswana miners earning high incomes compared with the rural population. The Government has accordingly resorted to a policy of controlling miners' wages. The labour problems at the mines may not yet be over, particularly bearing in mind that there are at least four competing trade unions, all significantly based in the traditional BPP stronghold of Francistown.

Fourth, the uneven distribution of Botswana's mineral wealth has tended to emphasise tribal divisions. Most of the wealth is located in the area of the Bamangwato tribe, to which Sir Seretse belonged. This fact has been exploited for political purposes by opposition parties, some of which are essentially tribally based. To offset the negative effects of the inequitable spread of mineral wealth, the Government is emphasising community development. The magnitude of the problem becomes clear when it is noted 1% of Botswana's rural population in 1977 enjoyed incomes of at least R7 000 p.a., while the figure for over half the rural households was under R630 p.a.

Finally, Botswana youth have in recent years demonstrated a new militancy previously unknown in the country. This manifested itself among both scholars and students and has led to clashes with the authorities. The presence in Botswana of several hundred radical young South Africans from Soweto has been blamed for encouraging the new militancy. In addition, the exiles from Soweto have been at odds with the Botswana Government for alleged "laziness" and their presence has also caused some resentment among the Batswana.

### The economy

Mining: The primary factor affecting Botswana's development has been the discovery of minerals and particularly diamonds. The growth in the mining sector enabled the average GDP of Botswana to grow by between 12 and 15% per annum since independence, and it is the country's fastest growing sector providing also a major proportion of Botswana's foreign exchange earnings.

#### 1. Diamonds

Botswana is the world's fourth largest producer of diamonds, which represent 51% of its exports. It is estimated that the diamond pipe at Orapa is the world's second largest with an expected life of approximately 30 years. There have been recent expansions at Orapa and also Letlhakane, and together with the new mine at Jwaneng (which is expected to start production in 1982), Botswana can be expected to increase its share of world diamond production.

#### 2. Copper and Nickel

Copper and Nickel deposits are mined at Selebi-Pikwe, with nickel production accounting for 75% of the project's revenue. The venture has, however, not been as successful as it was initially hoped. This is related to the instability of world copper and nickel prices and the fact that capital expenditure has been greater than was budgeted and that the mine last year experienced several labour strikes.

#### 3. Coal

The low to medium grade deposits, mined at Morupule, are mainly used in the Gabarone and Selebi-Pikwe power stations.

Agriculture: With some 60% of Botswana's population still rurally based, agriculture is of major importance. This sector is heavily concentrated on beef production, which accounts for a full 80% of agricultural output. Because of recurrent periods of drought and periodic outbreaks of foot-and-mouth and other livestock diseases, cattle raising is not an altogether reliable earner of income and revenue.

In common with other Third World countries, Botswana has been experiencing a population migration from the rural to the urban areas. The Government is actively trying to stem the tide and encourage people to remain on the land because the urban centres are simply unable to absorb the influx of unskilled work-seekers in terms of either jobs or housing. Accordingly, the Government has introduced an incomes policy which aims at preventing urban wage levels (including government, industrial and commercial sectors) from leaping ahead of rural levels. The Government is also undertaking an ambitious rural development programme to spread the country's wealth among the population, particularly in the rural areas, and is introducing agricultural and land reforms.

### Dependence on South Africa

Apart from relying on South Africa's transport and communications facilities, Botswana depends on the Republic for some 85% of its imports. Over 10% of Botswana's economically active population is employed on South African mines and Botswana also relies heavily on the revenue generated by its Customs Union with the Republic (an estimated P38 million p.a. presently). Botswana is, however, determined to lessen this dependence by, among other things, participating in the "anti-Pretoria constellation" and has severed ties with the Rand Monetary Area by introducing its own currency.

### Foreign relations

In its international posture Botswana is in many respects a typical Third World country: it belongs to the United Nations, Commonwealth, Organisation of African Unity and Non-Aligned Movement. In addition, it is a signatory to the Lomé Convention concluded between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states and the European Economic Community.

In line with its non-aligned stance in world politics, Botswana has kept out of great power ideological battles. It has also established diplomatic ties with both Western and socialist bloc countries; the latter group includes the Soviet Union, People's Republic of China (Peking) and Cuba. Botswana has also received foreign aid from both Western and communist states, in addition to the United Nations.

By virtue of its geographic location, Botswana's main external preoccupation has been its relations with the former Rhodesia, South Africa and Namibia - i.e. its white-ruled neighbouring territories. With both Rhodesia and South Africa, Botswana had close economic and communications links, while its concern with Namibia resulted primarily from the war situation in the territory and, of course, from Botswana's position as a Frontline state.

With Zimbabwe now an independent state, Botswana's main concern in the sub-continent is with Namibia and South Africa. Botswana is keen to see an internationally acceptable settlement in Namibia for a number of reasons: a sharp escalation in the war could draw Botswana into it, both as a haven for refugees and a base for Swapo guerrillas; an independent and stable Namibia could enhance regional stability and strengthen the Frontline grouping by adding another member; and an independent Namibia might offer landlocked Botswana another outlet to the sea at Walvis Bay. Botswana can therefore be expected to continue its participation in the Frontline group's attempts to secure Namibia's independence.

As for South Africa, Botswana has maintained a remarkably consistent policy of

acknowledging the necessity of economic ties with the Republic while keeping a pronounced political distance. Thus Botswana has made no secret of its disdain for apartheid, it has refused to "legitimise" apartheid by recognising the independence of former homelands, it has not established diplomatic ties with South Africa, it has steered clear of accepting official South African aid and has been actively involved in the setting-up of the so-called anti-Pretoria constellation of black states determined to lessen their dependence on the South African economy and communications network. In addition, Botswana has established a reputation for providing asylum or at least transit to political refugees from South Africa - most recently since the 1976 Soweto riots.

In future, under its new president, Botswana is bound to adhere to its implacable opposition to apartheid and to give at least political and moral support to the endeavours of the Organisation of African Unity to force South Africa to abolish apartheid. Botswana is keenly aware of its economic vulnerability vis-à-vis South Africa and has not given open support to international attempts to impose economic sanctions against South Africa. The Rhodesian war has also demonstrated to Botswana the severe consequences flowing from armed conflict in a neighbouring territory and it is therefore reasonable to argue that Botswana strongly favours a peaceful resolution of South Africa's racial problems. Nonetheless, there is evidence to suggest that ANC and PAC insurgents have in the past infiltrated the Republic via Botswana. Not only is this likely to continue, but the insurgents may even use Botswana as a base for guerrilla raids into South Africa. While it is singularly unlikely that Botswana will officially condone such actions - last year it in fact arrested armed insurgents en route to South Africa - it may well find it hard to effectively control them. In that case, Botswana would clearly expose itself to South African retaliation, both military and economic. This may conjure up a worst-case scenario, in which Botswana becomes a kind of Southern African "Lebanon" - something the new Botswana president will be determined to prevent.

Jan Smuts House

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