

# KANGWANE AND INGWAVUMA THE SWAZI VIEW

by John Watt

The land deal issue has shed an interesting side-light on an important aspect of Swazi society - the power of paternalism in this tiny kingdom.

When the initial bare details of the land deal were made known here early this year the reaction of the man in the street, possibly vaguely aware of the traditional Swazi claims to land currently across its borders, but probably quite unaware, was of surprised pleasure, but not much more. As the implications of the deal - such as the addition of 800,000 new citizens to the present 550,000 population - became apparent, debate developed.

The local newspaper, the Times of Swaziland, published comments from Swazi and expatriate businessmen operating here, and the doubts began to emerge. There was no questioning of Swaziland's main claim to the two areas of land on historical grounds. But doubts were expressed about the development of the two areas of land involved in the proposed deal. One Swazi said of the Ka-Ngwane area: 'I have looked at the map and I can see nothing but rocks and mountains there....' Other Swazis questioned the exclusion in the admittedly speculative maps published of towns such as Barberton, Carolina and even Nelspruit.

The hard-headed response of an experienced businessman here was: 'I don't know how much development has been achieved in those areas. But I think it's far less than we have achieved here. With the 800,000 new people, the nature of the whole country could change overnight. Unless there is a sizeable dowry, it's going to lower the standard of living in this country.'

A university student brought up the obvious point that South Africa was establishing a neat buffer area between the Republic and Mozambique.

At this point the firm hand of paternalism fell. Foreign Minister, Mr Richard Velapi Dlamini called senior members of the newspapers, radio and television and reminded them in strong terms that when 83-year-old King Sobhuza had informed the Nation of the land deal in March, his Ministry had issued a statement saying: 'The general public is warned that the subject of border and boundary adjustment is handled by His Majesty the King advised by his government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The public is, therefore, warned that nothing outside the official statement made by His Majesty at Lozithehlezi Palace on March 19 through the Minister of Foreign Affairs, should be said in this regard.' The point was taken, and from that time the media refrained from publishing or broadcasting comments critical of the deal from within Swaziland, although critical comments from outside the country were and are still published.

Internally, the official mood was reflected recently by the Times of Swaziland again, when it published a panoramic

picture of Kosi Bay on its front page, accompanied by the headline: This Will Be Ours.

The media also covered meetings, arranged by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with refugees from the Ingwavuma area who explained that they had fled because of harassment in KwaZulu, and a desire to pledge their allegiance to King Sobhuza. Estimates of the numbers of these refugees from the Ingwavuma area vary, but the Representative of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Swaziland would probably agree to a figure of 12 to 13,000 some of whom have been in the kingdom since 1976, when South Africa formally declared the Ingwavuma area part of KwaZulu. The distress and poverty of the Ingwavuma refugees is indisputable and their stories of harassment appear genuine to observers.

Within government itself, feelings are not clear. The 'No discussion' warning by Foreign Minister Dlamini applies to Cabinet too, and no Minister has made any comment on social implications, although the Minister of Health, for example, faced with the possibility of 800,000 extra Swazis, must have some apprehensive thoughts on the matter. Apart from Foreign Minister Dlamini, spokesmen authorised to pronounce on the land deal are Dr Sishayi Nxumalo, highly experienced politician, back-bench Member of Parliament, and Roving Ambassador for King Sobhuza, and Dr George Msibi, a back-bench MP who has been closely involved in the land deal talks since they began. Both stress the historical justifications for the inclusion of these pieces of land into Swaziland, but say little about the social implications, or the political connotations.

Similarly, little mention has been made of any economic disadvantages or advantages of the deal, apart from a tentative suggestion by Dr Msibi that at last Swaziland will have, in Kosi Bay, its own outlet to the sea.

The fury of the Zulu people, and of a large number of South Africans, has somewhat surprised Swaziland. It has been suggested by the powerful triumvirate authorised to speak on the issue, that this reaction is being fuelled by the English language Press, which, a recent statement said, has a vested interest in opposing any major move proposed by the Nationalist government. The explanation is plausible, but academic to most Swazis, who are probably more concerned with the wrath of four million Zulus,

Nonetheless, the approach chosen by authority in Swaziland appears to have been successful within the kingdom. There has been little discussion on the issue, which, it has now been established, is a matter for King Sobhuza, advised by his traditional councillors and governments, to decide. The Swazi nation has been urged to be united on the land deal, and there is no doubt about the stand on which it should be united. The power of paternalism, that vital thread in Swazi society, has thus far prevailed. □