Neil Parsons

Neil Parsons Willie Henderson Thomas Tlou
With an Epilogue by
Mwalimu
Julius K. Nyerere

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SERETSE KHAMA
1921-80

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SEREISE KHAMÁ
1921-80
by
Thomas Tlou, Neil Parsons & Willie Henderson
with an
Epilogue by Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere
MACMILLAN

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THE AUTHORS
Thomas Tlou, whose research concentrated on the early years of Seretse Khama, is Vice-Chancellor of the University of Botswana and a former diplomat. His books include History of Botswana (Macmillan, 1985). Neil Parsons, whose research concentrated on the middle years of Seretse Khama, is a historian who has taught and researched in Botswana. His books include A New History of Southern Africa (Macmillan, 1982 & 1993). Willie Henderson's research concentrated on the later years of Seretse Khama. He is Senior Lecturer in Continuing Studies at the University of Birmingham and a former development administrator in Botswana. His books include Economics and Language (Routledge, 1993).

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COUNCILLOR, 1956-60 POLITICIAN, 1960-62 PARTY LEADER, 1962-64
INTRODUCTION
The letter that changed history is now one of the prize possessions of the Botswana National Archives. It is an ordinary British airmail letter-form or 'aerogramme', a lightweight blue sheet of paper folded twice and marked 'If anything is enclosed this letter will be sent by ordinary mail.' The letterform is postmarked PADDINGTON W2 9 AM, 13 SEP 1948, and its preprinted sixpenny postage stamp is franked with the slogan 'Save Your Waste Paper for Salvage' - an indication of continuing post-war austerity in Britain. The letter was received by Seretse Kham's uncle, Tshekedi Khama, ten days later at Moeng, a remote village in the Tswapong Hills on the western edge of the Limpopo valley. Perhaps the first thing Tshekedi would have noticed on opening the letter is, written in the top left-hand corner: PS. Leina la gagwe ke Ruth Williams ('P.S. Her name is Ruth Williams'). Seretse Kham was born to rule a traditional kingdom within the British colonial territory known as the Bechuanaland Protectorate (now called Botswana). His father died when he was four years old, and he was proclaimed as the rightful ruler of his Bangwato people. His dominating and immensely energetic young uncle, Tshekedi, became regent until Seretse had grown up and finished his education. But when that letter arrived at Moeng on September 23rd, 1948, Tshekedi Khama set in train the events that were to lead to the disinherition of Seretse because of his marriage to an English woman. So deep was the affront of the marriage to white male supremacy in Africa, that the British government refused Seretse Kham the right even to live in his home country - exiling him and his wife to Britain. The story of Seretse Kham and Ruth Williams preoccupied the world's press for more than a year. They remained in the spotlight until they began their exile in London in 1950, and were the subject of interest and speculation until 1956 when they were permitted to return home to Bechuanaland. Their romance was seen as the tale of a noble African prince who sacrificed his throne for the love of a smart young English 'office girl'. Besides newspapers they were featured in magazines such as Life and Ebony in the U.S.A., Britain's Picture Post, and the Australian edition of Women's Wear BMeckly The story was
covered by radio news bulletins and the weekly newsreel reports shown in the cinemas of Britain and the Empire. The politics at the heart of the matter even inspired a stage play, which was banned by England's Lord Chancellor before it could be put on in a London theatre. Realization of the political chicaneries behind Seretse's deposition and exile, in both Britain and South Africa, split the political parties in the Westminster parliament. The furore almost led to the defeat in parliament of the Labour Party government, and it divided the ranks of the opposition Conservative Party in both Lords and Commons.

The treatment of Seretse and of his uncle Tshekedi by British governments, first Labour and then Conservative, raised questions about the lack of fundamental human rights in British colonies. Protests at home and abroad drew attention to rising resentment against colonialism overseas and to disquiet in Britain over the growing presence of people of African and Asian ancestry. Seretse and Ruth were the 'human interest story' which aroused the conscience of the West in the 1950s over the issues of racial discrimination and apartheid in southern Africa. The British government had been so craven towards the white regimes of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, that it had not allowed an African with a European spouse to be a traditional monarch in a neighbouring colonial territory.

The marriage of Seretse and Ruth, based as it was on the premise of equality between man and wife, was a shock to white and black traditionalists in southern Africa. It completely overturned common assumptions of the necessary domination of whites and males over blacks and females. But if Seretse and Ruth engendered secret fears in some people, they encouraged hope among others. For example, among 'coloured' people in South Africa, the success of this black-white marriage stood out triumphantly against the new apartheid laws. The laws prohibited not only marriage but all sexual affection between members of supposedly different 'races' and denied the legitimacy of the very existence of millions of people of colour.

For women in general in Africa, and especially in Bechuanaland, the new model marriage of Seretse and Ruth could also be seen as a symbol of hope for the future. This was a time when marriage patterns were being eroded by increased male migration from rural areas, to fight in the Second World War and to work in the mines and towns of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. Women were among the strongest supporters of Seretse Khama among the Bangwato in the early 1950s; and rural women subsequently proved to be the backbone of the electors voting for Seretse Khama's political party in the 1960s and 1970s.

After Seretse Khama and his family were allowed back home in 1956, they lived as commoners or private citizens and not as chiefs or royalty. But Seretse found himself increasingly impelled into taking a lead in local and then national politics. Up to this point in his life, Seretse Khama had been in a sense a prisoner of history - though he was a hero in the eyes of many people because he had both stood up and suffered for love and liberty. Now, freed from the constraints of hereditary status, he could realize greater individual potential. If he had wanted to,
he could easily have become the paramount chief of the Bangwato after Tshekedi's death in 1959, and all the political parties would probably have nominated him as titular non-executive first President of independent Botswana in the 1960s. But Seretse chose instead to lead a national political party aimed at uniting the whole of Bechuanaland. This led to his becoming Prime Minister in 1965, and executive President of the Republic of Botswana in 1966.

The name Seretse Khama became almost synonymous with Botswana in the eyes of the world. For two or three years after independence most outside observers assumed that he would be nothing other than the ineffective leader of an ineffective state - a state which was, for ever, the hostage of its giant white neighbours. But Seretse Khama proved to be the anchor for a great sea-change in government and administration, building up capacity for economic planning at the same time as strengthening parliamentary democracy. Over the quarter century from 1965 onwards, previously impoverished Botswana was to have the fastest economic growth in the world.

By the end of the 1960s Botswana became known as a model of 'non-racial democracy within an area of racial hatred and tension ... an effective and serious challenge to the credibility of South Africa's racial policies' - to quote Seretse's own words. He also looked forward to an association of states in southern Africa 'committed to democracy and non-racialism. From 1974 Seretse Khama was one of the five 'Front-Line' presidents who promoted the liberation of Zimbabwe and eventually the liberation of Namibia and South Africa.

Seretse used his image as a moderate with liberal principles to explain to the West the necessity for armed liberation in southern Africa. He was responsible for setting the 'Front-Line' alliance on the path to what is now called the Southern African Development Community (SADC) - emphasizing 'concrete projects and specific programmes rather than grandiose schemes and bureaucratic institutions:

As such a prominent victim of racial discrimination and apartheid, Seretse Khama had the last laugh. By leading his country into a prosperous, nonracial liberal democracy, he demonstrated to the world that majority rule could be successful in a free Zimbabwe, a free Namibia, and in a free South Africa.

This book is the first full account of the life and times of Seretse Khama. We have benefitted from both oral and documentary records. There is an extraordinary amount of personal evidence of Seretse as a child and young man up to 1948. After that there is an abundance of formerly secret records in Botswana and British government archives, which reveal the inner history of events up to about 1965. The last 15 years up to 1980 are covered by the more public record of speeches and newspaper reports, supplemented by the insights gained from interviews and the personal experiences of the authors. Unfortunately the private correspondence of Seretse Khama was destroyed in a fire at his widow's house two years after his death.
The three authors of this book are academics with a long experience of Botswana. But we do not pretend to have written a definitive murk of scholarly historical biography. We hope that the book reads more like the higher journalism of other political biographies. We also hope that this book stimulates people who knew Seretse Khama to correct this version of his life and times, and to record their own versions of what happened.

We are aware that there is much more research that needs to be done on the life and times of Seretse Khama, especially on the period of his career as politician and President. For instance, though there is a long-playing record of his radio speeches published by Botswana Information Services, there is as yet no collection of the praise-poems (maboko) and songs that were recited and sung about him.

There have been a number of biographical studies previously written about Seretse Khama, most of which cover only parts of his life. I The study which we have found most useful in helping us to understand him as a statesman has been Larry Frank's doctoral thesis titled 'Khama and Jonathan: a Study of Authority and Leadership in Southern Africa' (1974). Frank begins by quoting the words of the French political philosopher Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755):

At the birth of societies, it is the leaders of the commonwealth who create the institutions; afterwards it is the institutions that shape the leaders.2

Individual leaders can be extremely important in setting the moral standards of politics and finance. Public opinion and the press in Botswana have used the standards set during Seretse Khama's presidency to expose and censure corruption in public life during the greedy eighties and nineties.

Larry Frank rejected the views of other political scientists who saw Botswana and Lesotho as helpless client-states tied to South Africa. By contrasting President Seretse Khama of Botswana with Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan of Lesotho, Frank showed how political leaders could pick and choose from a range of policy options. Frank pointed out that though Seretse had inherited traditional authority and had acquired the charisma of being a martyr to colonialism, he broke with traditionalism and also - unlike independence leaders elsewhere in Africa - refused to adopt a charismatic form of leadership. Instead, Seretse stressed modern legal-rational authority through liberal democratic institutions. Leabua by contrast refused to accept the modern rationalities of democratic institutions, and tried instead to exploit the apparent irrationalities of traditionalism.

Larry Frank showed how the character of political leadership, as well as political circumstances, can help to explain the contrasting histories of states. He also underlined how Seretse Khama was born great, lost that greatness (xii) when he was barred from succession, but later had greatness thrust upon him as national leader.

Some critics may object that this is a thoroughly 'bourgeois' view of political biography. It is 'bourgeois' in the sense that it promotes the idea of individuals
arising from the common mass to achieve self-fulfilment through their own enterprise, becoming so powerful that they can really mould history to their own ends.3 But we could object that biographies of great leaders are nothing new and long predate bourgeois society. The stories of ancient heroes, from Homer onwards, are part of the founding myths of cultures in Africa, Europe and elsewhere.

This is no place to debate at any length the role of the individual in history, or the role of biography in exploring individual consciousness and cultural identity. But we do think that biography can be illuminated by bringing out the contradictions between the inner life and the outer history of an individual. These contradictions help us to understand the individual's importance in the structures of society and history: how much Seretse's life affected history, as well as how much history affected his life.

There were two major contradictions in Seretse Khama's personal life that affected his public position as President of Botswana. Firstly, that Seretse was both kgosi and mothofela (an ordinary person) - an aristocrat and yet a commoner. Secondly, that he was both Motswana and Lekgowa ('a European') at heart - able to be both an African nationalist and a cosmopolitan humanist. Seretse was never the unambiguous representative of a single ethnic group or social class. He identified himself as a nationalist upholding the interests of a whole country and not just a section of it. His political party had a strong class base in the new middle class. But Seretse Khama never lost the prestige of being the rightful traditional ruler of the Bangwato. This was to prove very useful in politics. His traditional legitimacy helped to facilitate the democratization of local government after independence, and to quell 'tribal' opposition to the reduction of the privileges of traditional rulers.

With his colleagues at work, Seretse maintained Setswana culture, tastes and humour to the end. At home he lived in a culturally English household. This contradiction also proved to be useful. Seretse's cosmopolitan nature helped to reinforce Botswana's relations with Western powers, who might otherwise have backed totally the white-rulled states of South Africa and Rhodesia. Powerful people in America and Europe cared about Botswana to an extent that was denied other independent African states in the region.

Seretse's marriage and his devotion to his immediate family were, on the face of things, liabilities in local political culture. They could alienate both older traditionalists and 'black consciousness' youths. But at the same time Ruth and the children were assets, helping Seretse to retain the loyalty of ordinary people. They were a constant reminder to the world that Seretse had been, and still was, a man of integrity and moral courage.

The fact of Seretse, being a 'brother-in-law' of the British may also have helped to legitimate the role of non-blacks in Botswana after independence, as help-meets rather than masters. But it was no help in making Seretse's leading role in Bechuanaland politics acceptable to the British colonial authorities. As the reader will see, the authorities were unenthusiastic about Seretse Khama becoming the
full executive leader of government - though he might be the obvious choice as ceremonial head of state.

We trust that this biography throws sufficient light on these outward contradictions in Seretse Khama's life to enable the reader to see some of the inner light of the man. We also hope that, on finishing the book, the reader will be able to appreciate why so many people in Botswana felt, and still feel, bereft of Seretse Khama as their leader.

The authors wish to acknowledge and express their gratitude to the various funders who helped them during the years spent in the research and writing of this biography.

Willie Henderson acknowledges two Nuffield Foundation grants, and one grant from the University of Birmingham, which enabled him to undertake several research visits to Botswana. Thomas Tlou acknowledges assistance from University of Botswana research funds and facilities, in support of his extensive oral interviews at Serowe and elsewhere. Neil Parsons acknowledges the Ford Foundation for a grant to get him started, and the Harry Oppenheimer Institute (Centre for African Studies) at the University of Cape Town for a fellowship to help him finish. In between he survived thanks to honorary fellowships at the National Museum & Art Gallery in Gaborone and at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies of the University of London.

We are all indebted to the Kgalagadi Management Services Trust for meeting a substantial portion of the costs of publishing this book.

We acknowledge access to official and private archives in Botswana, Britain and elsewhere. We have had some random privileged access to official documents for the 'closed' period of the last 30 years. The three main archival sources have been the Botswana National Archives in Gaborone, the Public Record Office in London, and the Khama Family Papers now in the Khama III Memorial Museum in Serowe. Some use has also been made of documents in the National Archives at Harare and in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., as well as documents and printed sources in university libraries in Botswana, South Africa and Britain.

Archival files are listed in the bibliography and statement of sources at the end of the book.

We thank the directors and staff of all these archives and libraries for their assistance. A special word must go to Gilbert Mpolokeng for his unique knowledge of the Botswana National Archives. The late Leapeetswe T. Khama generously permitted us access to the Khama Family Papers even before they were deposited in the Khama III Memorial Museum at Serowe. We were also fortunate in being able to use the collection of a wide range of sources by the late Prof. Michael Crowder, before they were deposited in the library of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in London. We greatly regret that Michael Crowder was unable to complete his biography of Tshekedi Khama before his death.
Our most special thanks go to Sir Seretse Khama's widow, Lady Khania, who has been gracious and helpful throughout. We apologise to her for the long wait before the book was published, and we beg her indulgence and that of her children for where we have done less than justice to our subject.

Two people, Lebang Mpotokwane and Joseph Legwaila, formerly within Botswana's Office of the President, originally set us on the path of research. They have been helpful at every stage since. But we would stress that, while this book had initial official help, it is not an official biography. The final text has not been subject to the approval of anyone else other than its authors and its publishers.

Further acknowledgements must include the many people, alas not all still living, who have helped us through interviews, letters and comments. We list them alphabetically.


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Elsewhere: Malcolm Fraser and Mrs Fraser in Australia; Ivan L. Head and Arnold Smith in Canada; John Millard in Kenya; Carl Anonsen, Ashjorn and Kari Eidhammer in Norway; Lull Callinicos, Cohn Eglín, Marion Higgs, Mr Justice Isaacs, Connie Minchin, Christopher Saunders, Oliver Tambo and Jane Starfield in South Africa; Richard Dale, R.H.(Bob) Edwards, Pierre Landell-Mills, Gay W. Seidman and William E. Schaufele in the U.S.A.
A few of these people saw and kindly made comments on fragments of our manuscript. We have spared them the embarrassment of seeing the final draft. There is therefore no one to blame except us for the book as published.

Final thanks are reserved for two very special friends of Seretse Khama, who have gone out of their way to help us. Sir Peter Fawcus has given us the benefit of his views on a number of topics, especially colonial administration. Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere has permitted us to use, as the Epilogue of this book, his oration written in 1986 on the occasion of the unveiling of a statue of Seretse Khama in Gaborone.

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December 1993

A Note on Setswana Words
There are a few words in Setswana - the national language of Botswana - which have become part of English usage in Botswana and are frequently used in this book.

The two most commonly used Setswana words are kgotla and kgosi. Kgotla means traditional court. Kgosi means traditional chief. In English the word kgotla is usually reserved for the great court or forum at the centre of traditional towns such as Serowe; and the word kgosi is usually reserved for the paramount chief or king who used to preside over debates and court cases in the kgotla. You will also find the word bogosi in this book: it is derived from the word kgosi and means traditional monarchy or 'chieftainship'.

Setswana is a Bantu language using prefixes and suffixes to modify the meaning of root-words. Thus the root-word Tswana becomes Motswana in the singular for one Tswana person, and becomes Batswana in the plural for Tswana people. The root-word becomes Setsmwa when referring to Tswana language and culture, and Botswana when referring to Tswana country. Similarly one person from Seretse Khana's original morafe ('tribe'), the Na

Ngwato, is called a Mongwato. Ngwato people are today called Bangwato (previously being called Bagamangwato or Bamangwato) and their dialect of Setswana is Sengwato. Their country is Gammangwato.

Setswana has been a written language since the early 19th century. The complete Holy Bible, both Old and New Testaments, had been translated and printed in Setswana by 1857. But spellings have changed over the years: current standards have been fixed only since the 1930s. During colonial times the Batsana were referred to by Europeans - using 19th century orthography and a southern dialect - as 'Bechuana'. The earliest European visitors quite correctly called the country 'Boochuana'. But the British, who were to rule the country, began to call it 'Bechuana-land'.
There are also a number of English abbreviations relating to Botswana which may be unfamiliar to readers. The most commonly used in this book is B.P for 'Bechuanaland Protectorate' - the full colonial name of what is now the Republic of Botswana. Other abbreviations are listed in the Bibliography and Statement of Sources at the end of the book.

Chronology

1921 Birth of Seretse Khama at Serowe
1923 Death of Kgosi Khama II; accession of Kgosi Sekgoma II
1925 Death of Kgosi Sekgona I; acclamation of Seretse as Kgosi and Tshekedi Khama as regent for him 1930 Death of Tebogo, Seretse's mother
1931-4 Standards I-IV at Lovedale Institution, Cape Province
1933 Tshekedi temporarily deposed after 'flogging incident'
1935 Withdrawn sick from Lovedale; educated privately
1936 Standard VI at Adams College, Natal
1937-9 Forms I-III at Tiger Kloof Institution, Cape Province
1940-1 Forms IV-V at Lovedale
1942-4 B.A. at Fort Hare (South African Native College)
1945 University of Witwatersrand classes (February-July)
1945-6 Further studies at Balliol College, Oxford
1946-8 Barrister studies at Inner Temple, London
1948 Marriage to Ruth Williams in London
1949 Re-acclaimed as Kgosi in Serowe; Harragin Judicial Enquiry
1950 Summoned to London and deposed; temporarily allowed home before starting 5-year exile in Britain
1952 Exile made 'permanent' by British government
1952 Kgotla riot at Serowe
1953-6 Living at 'Aldwick', Mapledale Avenue, Addiscombe, Surrey (xviii)
1956 Final reconciliation with Tshekedi; renounces bogosi and returns home to Serowe with family as 'private citizen'
1958 Vice-Chairman of Bangwato Tribal Council; active member of African Advisory and Joint Advisory Councils at Lobatse
1959 Death of Tshekedi, after signing of Bangwato copper concession; succeeds him as Secretary of Tribal Council
1960 Hospitalized in London (May-July); founding of Bechuanaland People's Party (B.P.P.)
1961 Elected to Legislative Council (June); founding of Bechuanaland Democratic Party (B.D.P.)
1963 Lobatse constitutional talks
1965 Becomes Prime Minister at head of B.D.P. government after elections; founding of Botswana National Front (B.N.F.)
1966 Knighted by Queen Elizabeth II; sworn in as President of Republic of Botswana (September)
1967 Diamonds at Orapa; state visits to Malawi and Zambia
1968 State visit of President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia
1969 Customs Union renegotiated; speech to U.N. General Assembly
1970 Kazungula '4-way-border' and ferry crisis
1972-3 Botswana achieves budgetary self-sufficiency
1973 State visits to Tanzania and Lesotho
1974 Front-Line president in Zimbabwe and Namibia negotiations
1976 Official and state visits to U.S.A. and Canada, India and China; stand-by heart pacemaker inserted in chest
1977 Military incursions by Rhodesia; founding of Botswana Defence Force (B.D.F.)
1978 Massacre of B.D.F. patrol at Leshoma; official visit to Britain; Harvard honorary doctorate
1979 Founding of S.A.D.C.C.; state visit of Queen Elizabeth II; Ian Khama installed as Kgosi of Bangwato
1980 Death of Seretse Khama; independence of Republic of Zimbabwe

Illustrations
Fig.1. Seretse and his cousin Lenyeletse in Black Watch uniform, with Seretse aged four and a half. (Source: Kham III Memorial Museum, Serowe) Fig.2. Until he blossomed around the age of 14, Seretse was a quiet, polite (xix) and reserved child. (Source: Kham II Memorial Museum, Serowe) Fig.3. Seretse with fellow student Charles Njonjo from Kenya, at Fort Hare University College in the winter of 1943-44. (Source: Parsons, New History of Southern Africa, Macmillan)
FigA. Seretse and his wife Ruth, in their Campden Hill flat in London, a few days after their marriage in 1948. (Source: Tlou & Campbell, History of Botswana, Macmillan)
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August 1976. (Source: Botswana Information Services) Fig.19. Seretse with the children of Lesedi Primary School in Gaborone, September 1976. (Source: Botswana Information Services) Fig.20. Palais des Nations, Geneva, 21 May, 1976. Seretse accepts the Nansen Medal for Botswana's services to refugees. (Source: Tlou & Campbell, History of Botswana) Fig.21. Seretse and Kaunda, with Vice-President Masire and Lady Khama, relax at Seretse's ranch near the Limpopo, June 1979. (Source: Botswana Information Services) Fig.22. An ailing Seretse Khama chairs the inaugural summit meeting of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, Lusaka, April 1980. (Source: Botswana Information Services)

List of Major Characters

1. BANGWATO

Wife & children: Lady Khama (Ruth Williams), Jacqueline Tebogo (ter Haar), Seretse Ian Khama (Kgosi Khama IV rules 1979-), Tshekedi Stanford, Anthony Paul.
Family: mother Tebogo Kebailele; father Kgosi Sekgoma II (ruled 1923-25); grandmothers Mma-Gaopotlhake Kebailele (maternal), Mma-Bessie Tshukudu (paternal), Semane Seathogo (step-); grandfathers Kebailele Sekgoma (maternal), Kgosi Khama ML (paternal, ruled 1872-73 & 1875-1923); sisters Oratile Ratshosa, Naledi Khama; brothers Gasetshwarwe Kgamane, Botseletse Khama; nursemaid Karu.
Aunts: Sethakwane Moloi, Ella Moshoela. Uncles: Tshekedi Khama (Regent 1925-50); other 'uncles' Gorewang Kgamane, Phethu Mphoeng, Gaoletsa Tshukudu, Edirilwe Seretse, Serogola Seretse, Peto Sekgoma, Keaboka Kgaman, Serogola Kgaman, Molwa 6ekgoma.
'Cousins': younger Lenyeletse 'Lenny' Seretse, Goareng Mosinyi, Serogola Lekhutile, Leapeetswe 'Peachy' Khama, Seckga 'Secky' Khana; Dikgakgamatso Kebailele; older Simon Ratshosa (& brother-in-law), Obeditse Ratshosa, Johnnie Ratshosa.
Headmen: Gaofetoge Mathiba, Tsogang P. Sebina, Peter M. Sebina, Kesebonye Sephekelo Tshukudu.

Traditional politicians: Leetile Disang Raditladi, Dingalo Nthebolang, Dingalo Monageng, Monametsie Chiepe, Casalis.

2. OTHER BATSWANA


3. COLONIAL OFFICIALS


4. BRITAIN


5. SOUTH AFRICA

6. NORTH AMERICA
Canada: Pierre Trudeau (Prime Minister), Arnold Smith (Commonwealth Secretary-General).

7. ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA
Abby Farah (Egypt); Daudi Jawara (Gambia); E.A. Boateng & Joe Appiah (Ghana); Charles Njonjo & Tom Mboya (Kenya); Chief Leabua Jonathan, King Moshoeshoe II & Queen Mamohato (Lesotho); Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda (Malawi); Samora Machel & Marcelino dos Santos (Mozambique); Hosea Kutako, Dr Kerina & Sam Nujoma (Namibia); Prof. Adebayo Adeji, Mr Justice Aguda & General Gowan (Nigeria); King Sobhuza II & Princes Makhosini & Maphevu (Swaziland); Julius K. Nyerere (Tanzania); Kabaka 'Freddie' Mutesa II & Idi Amin (Uganda); Mobutu Sese Seko (Zaire); Braim Nkondo, Roy Welensky, Harry Nkumbula, Muriel Sanderson, Kenneth Kaunda & Mark Chona (Zambia); Joshua Nkomo, Sir Godfrey Huggins (Lord Malvern), David Stirling, Ian Smith, Ndabaningi Sithole, Herbert & Victoria Chitepo, Abel Muzorewa & Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe).

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Fig. 1. Seretse and his cousin Lenyeletse in Black Watch uniform, with Seretse aged four and a half.
Fig. 2. Until he blossomed around the age of 14, Seretse was a quiet, polite and reserved child.

Fig. 3. Seretse with fellow student Charles Njonjo from Kenya, at Fort Hare University College in the winter of 1943-44.
Fig. 4. Seretse and his wife Ruth, in their Campden Hill flat in London, a
few days after their marriage in 1948.

Fig. 5. The moment of drama in the Serowe Kgotla, 23 June, 1949.
Fig. 6. Seretse stepping off the flying-boat at Southampton while Ruth stayed in Bechuanaland, February 1950.
Fig. 7. Seretse Khama became the focus of anti-colonial protest movements, March 1950.

Fig. 8. Seretse arrived at Gaborone airstrip, 31 March, 1950.
Fig. 9. Seretse, Ruth and baby Jacqueline (in carry-cot) arriving off the Sunderland flying-boat at Southampton on a summer's day, August 1950.
Fig. 10. Seretse, Ruth and daughter Jacqueline in their Chelsea flat, 1951.
Fig. 11. The end of six years' exile, September 1956.

Fig. 12. CeleTingvicorin the February 1965 general election.
Fig. 14. President Khama delivers his historic address to the General Assembly of the United Nations, 24 September, 1969.

Fig. 15. After being sworn in for a second term as President, October 1969.
Fig. 17. Arriving at a provincial airport in China, August 1976.

Fig. 18. Seretse and Ruth with a North Korean children's accordion band, August 1976.
Fig. 19. Seretse with the children of Lesedi Primary School in Gaborone, September 1976.

Fig. 20. Palais des Nations, Geneva, 21 May 1976. Seretse accepts the Nansen Medal for Botswana's services to refugees.

Fig. 21. Seretse and Kaunda, with Vice-President Masire and Lady Khama, relax at Seretse's ranch near the Limpopo, June 1979.
Fig. 22. An ailing Seretse Khama chairs the inaugural summit meeting of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, Lusaka, April 1980.

Chapter 1
INHERITANCE
1921-25
Seretse Khama was a symbol of political unity and reconciliation between hostile factions even at the moment of his birth. He was born early on the morning of
July 1st, 1921, in the town of Serowe in colonial Botswana in the middle of the southern hemisphere winter, when nights are cold but the land warms up during the day under cloudless skies.

An old midwife, probably barefoot and dressed in a faded and patched long cotton skirt and cotton headwrap, hurried across the bare dusty ground of the town centre to the royal household of Kgosi Khama III, to announce the birth of a child. A grandson and ultimate heir had been born at last. Khama's people had begun to despair lest Khama's son, Sekgoma Khama, already an old man, were to die without fathering a legitimate heir to eventually become kgosi (chief or king) in Sekgoma's place.

The royal household at the foot of Serowe Hill consisted of both traditional and modern buildings. Circular-walled smaller buildings, built of reddish brown clay with conical thatched grey roofs, were clustered together and surrounded by low clay walls plastered with traditional Setswana designs. There was also a large square brick house, with a corrugated iron roof and wide verandahs burnished with red, green or black polish and enclosed by metal gauze mosquito screening. Royal servants and retainers constantly swept the compound with reed brooms.

The well-furnished square house was kept spotlessly clean for receiving European visitors.

The royal household was the focal point of one of the largest conurbations in Africa south of the equator. Twenty thousand people or more lived in a scattered town of conical thatched houses with clay forecourts, grouped into numerous compounds under acacia shade trees and circled by thornbush fencing to deter grazing goats.

Next to the royal household stood the royal kgoda, an extensive assembly area. Its red sandy ground was beaten bare by innumerable feet, and protected from the wind by a curved stockade of stocky wooden poles. The kgotla served as the royal judicial court, where the kgosi sat in judgement on a locally made camp-chair before an open fire place under a tall sacred tree. It was also the national forum for assemblies of male elders, on special occasions joined by older women sitting at the back. Each division or ward of the town also had its own smaller kgotla as a court and meeting place. Next to the royal kgotla there was the royal cattle byre, where cattle given in tribute or caught wandering ownerless in the veld were penned. At the back of the kgotla and the royal household, to the north and east, were the steep rocky slopes of Serowe Hill rising 70 metres above the town.

West of the kgotla, at the end of the short track that led to the main motor road, there was a large open-sided elementary school for children, known as the Central School, with a low corrugated iron roof supported by wooden poles. The motor road from Palapye and the railway line 50 kilometres east ran two or three kilometres further west of the royal kgotla, beyond the edge of the town, to the administrative offices of the British resident magistrate. Most of the dozen or so Europeans trading at Serowe had their stores and workshops along or near the motor road between the kgotla and the magistracy.
Much closer to the kgotla than the magistracy, next to a prominent rock on the western side of Serowe Hill, stood the residence of a European missionary of the London Missionary Society. This was no self-contained mission station standing apart from the town as in many African communities. The L.M.S. was in effect a state church. It supervised (with one notable exception) the elementary schools in different parts of town. The national church which the missionary served stood on the pebbled plain patched with brown grass, beyond the southern edge of the town. The church was a large semi-gothic building designed to seat hundreds of people, built in recent years from sandstone blocks, with a corrugated iron roof, a square east-end tower and stubby metal steeple.

After some days in seclusion with his mother and the midwives, the child was anointed and protected from witchcraft by three male elders who were medicine men of repute - namely Lerubisi, Mokgwathi and Kehurile. Such small practices of traditional Setswana medicine survived even in Christian households, not that there was a great distinction between Christian and 'pagan' people now that Christianity was the state religion. People's attitude to Setswana medicine remained eclectic, keeping some elements and rejecting others.

A newborn child was traditionally regarded as teetering on the brink of life, balanced between the worlds of the living and of the dead. The child was nurtured in confinement with its mother for three or four months in a small hut, its entrance barred against strangers by a thin reed.

When the child was considered strong enough and aware of its surroundings, it was presented to the public. Khama, a tall bowed figure in his late eighties, moved slowly into the royal kgotla, with the young prince carried tightly in his arms. He held up the child to the assembled hundreds, to whom he proclaimed: 'Your king has been born!' The crowd roared back, 'A pula e ne!': let it rain! - may blessings come. At this point it is said that Khama playfully touched his royal staff of office on the prince's tiny fingers, which opened to clutch it tightly. Again the assembly roared its approval. 'He shall reign,' added Khama. Khama then formally named the prince 'Seretse'. The royal succession of Seretse the son of Sekgoma, grandson of Khama, was now constitutionally assured in Setswana law. The succession had been announced and publicly acclaimed in the royal kgotla of the Bangwato people.

The birth of Seretse marked the fulfilment of a five-year-long reconciliation between Khama and his son Sekgoma, after 20 previous years of enmity. The name Seretse, given by Khama, was well chosen. Seretse was a family name, that of Khama's favourite and most faithful brother. It could also be that the name stood for the reconciliation of father and son - as the word seretse means the moist clay, sediment or mortar that binds things together. Thirty years later the English press was to translate it as 'red earth'. Seretse himself sometimes opted for 'concrete', i.e. cement, and the people of the Republic of Botswana were subsequently able to joke that their president's name was mud.

Seretse was also given another name, Goitsebeng, at birth or soon after. The meaning of the name is 'It is the masters who know, but is otherwise obscure.'
One tradition is that it was given to him by his father, Sekgoma Khama, who was away in the north at the time of Seretse's birth. The other tradition is that it was given to Seretse by Khama's wife Semane, following the tradition that the paternal grandmother had a special role in naming a child.7 The mother of Sekgoma, Khama's first wife, had in fact died in 1889 and Semane had been Khama's wife only since 1900. With the birth of Seretse, Semane now had to come to terms with the removal of the otherwise certain succession of her 16-year-old son Tshekedi after Sekgoma.

In his later youth Seretse sometimes used another middle name - Maphiri, signing himself as 'Seretse M. Khama'. Maphiri or Mma-phiri literally means 'mother-hyena'. It was a praise-name given to the lineage of Tshukudu, Seretse's mother's family. Tshukudu had been a famous warrior, and Maphiri was a suitable honorific because of the enormous strength and power of the hyena's jaws. (The female gender was appropriate as hyena packs are led by matriarchs.) Seretse was the inheritor of a famous name, Khama - the British had dubbed his grandfather 'Khama the Great' - and of a long dynasty of Bangwato rulers, the Bangwato being one of those groups of people speaking Setswana who are known as Batswana.

The royal line of the Bangwato traces its origins back to ancestral figures who may have lived in the seventeenth century. The story is told of a young man called Ngwato adopting the Phuti or duiker, a small antelope, as the 'totem' or emblem (seboko) of his mother's people. In doing so he replaced the Kwena or crocodile clan identity of his father.

Ngwato's mother was known in Setswana fashion as Mma-Ngwato. The people therefore became known as Ba-ga-Mma-Ngwato, or more succinctly as Ba-Mma-Ngwato. Hence foreign visitors in the nineteenth century wrote of the 'Bamangwato'. The even shorter term 'Bangwato' is most commonly used in Botswana today. ('Mongwato' is used to refer to one of them.)

The Bangwato continued to live as a junior group among the Bakwena until the wars that began to beset the Batswana and other peoples of the southern African interior in the last half of the eighteenth century. After a fight over women and cattle, which they lost, they left the Bakwena to go north into what is today Botswana's Central District. In so doing they were following the trade pathways that led through the Kalahari (Kgalagadi) thirstlands to the elephant-hunting grounds of the Boteti River and the Okavango marshes.

By 1850, when the wars of the previous century had at last died down, the Bangwato had conquered and absorbed neighbouring groups of people into a state based on a capital town in the Shoshong hills south of the future capital of Serowe. The Bangwato king, Kgosi Sekgoma I, father of 15-year-old Khama, ruled over a diversity of people as his subjects, including Sepedi-speaking Batswapong and Sishona-speaking Bakalanga in the more fertile north and Khoisan-speaking peoples in the thirstlands.

There was now an aristocracy of Phuti clan members or 'true' Bangwato related to the royal line. But commoners from subordinate groups were increasingly incorporated into the state as their children became members of national age-
grades or age-regiments (mephato), bound together by the secret signs of the same initiation school. Most subordinate groups were allowed to keep their old chiefs, who now became subordinate headmen of 'wards' within the state. But the wards were kept under royal control by mostly being clustered around the aristocratic wards in the capital town. The Bangwato were mixed farmers, growing grain crops as well as herding livestock, hunting wildlife and gathering wild crops. They grew the rainfed summer crops of sorghum and maize, beans and melons - their basic diet - in fields beside isolated hills and periodically flowing rivers. But even eastern Botswana is mostly marginal land for agriculture, being subject to semi-regular and often disastrous droughts. Hence the importance of herding, hunting and gathering. Groups of Bangwato also traded widely, exchanging goods such as grain, honey and salt, chickens and goats with each other - and ivory and wildlife furs, ostrich shells and locally manufactured iron hoe-heads for the cloth and glass beads of long-distance traders. Cattle were the major form of wealth held by the aristocracy and by the kgosi in particular. They were accumulated through conquest and the tribute rendered by commoners, as well as being a store of value earned by trade. Rich people exercised political power by 'loaning' their cattle to poor retainers in return for loyalty. This loan system is known as the mafisa system. Sometimes historians call it, albeit not wholly accurately, 'cattle feudalism'.

Types of mafisa system have been common to most peoples in southern Africa for at least a thousand years.9 The thirstlands of the Kalahari were not then as thirsty as they are today at the end of the twentieth century. In the mid-nineteenth century people with cattle and sheep were generally able to penetrate deep into the Kalahari thirstlands, to graze their stock around grassy pans filled with water during the summer rains. Such surface water also attracted enormous herds of plains wildlife, including many species of antelope, and big game such as elephants and giraffes. This wildlife was already being depleted by the firepower of muzzle-loaded shotguns, notably the 'Tower' musket which was mass manufactured in England from about the 1840s. Khama the son of Sekgoma I seems to have had a puritan soul from an early age. He was known for sitting apart from those who caroused by the fire on winter nights. He was converted to Christian belief by an itinerant Motswana evangelist of the London Missionary Society from the south. In May 1860, aged about 25, he was baptized. He then became, if he was not already, a teetotal fanatic against the corrupting influence of imported alcohol - which he continued to see as the white man's main way of trickery and stealing the black man's wealth. By the 1870s there was vigorous commerce in ox-drawn wagons from the coastal town of Port Elizabeth in the Cape Colony in the south. The wagoners, English and Scots and Griqua and Boer, came to buy ivory and furs and feathers. They sold horses and goods manufactured in Europe or the Cape, including old-style muskets and new-fangled rifles, woollen, cotton and linen clothing, iron pots and iron ploughs, wagons and carts, and pernicious 'Cape Smoke' brandy. Exotic
tastes that were now developed locally included coffee, tea and tobacco, Victorian women’s dresses and men's hats. Such imported goods inevitably accumulated, and were consumed, among the rich and powerful living in the interior. Khama twice seized power from his own father, first in 1872-73 and finally in 1875, at the head of a faction of young Christian royals within the state. The Bangwato kingdom had been wracked by aristocratic rivalries since 1857. Avaricious rivals vied to build up wealth and power in cattle and imported goods traded for ivory and other spoils of the hunt such as furs and feathers. Disputes among the Bangwato were encouraged by African kingdoms to the north and south, and by Boer republics to the south and east. All wanted a share of the wealth in ivory passing through the Bangwato state from the north to the south. White hunter-traders were coming in ever greater numbers, and were becoming less and less easy to control. Gold prospectors were attracted by the small gold rush to Tati (Francistown) north of the Bangwato. Boer trekkers were trying to migrate from the Transvaal across Bangwato territory to new hunting grounds in the north-west, beyond the Kalahari. Wildlife was being rapidly decimated by firearms. There were also new diamond mines at Kimberley less than a thousand kilometres to the south. Kimberley generated great demands for grain and meat, wood and water, and above all for cheap African labour. These demands were to turn the interior of southern Africa upside-down, stripping the land away from indigenous people and imposing British colonial rule on them.

Khama began his reign over the Bangwato by coming to terms with the multiple crises facing the kingdom. He gave royal cattle herds and Basarwa ('Bushmen') servant huntsmen to his royal relatives. But he also put aristocratic wards inside new super-wards, under the charge of vassal (batlhanka) headmen directly responsible to the kgosi. He gave white hunter-traders their own small kgotla to settle internal disputes. But he expelled quarrelsome whites who flouted his laws against the import and consumption of alcoholic drinks. '0 Khama's connection with the British was built on his relations with the London Missionary Society. One missionary in particular had been his mentor - John Mackenzie, who was L.M.S. minister at Shoshong between 1862 and 1876. It was also Mackenzie who introduced Khama to fame overseas, through his 1871 memoirs entitled Ten Years North of the Orange River. "

In August 1876, after Mackenzie had left Shoshong, Khama addressed his first official message to the British Governor and High Commissioner in Cape Town. He strongly objected to, and asked for British action against, 'Dopper' Boer trekkers from the Transvaal who were attempting to force their way across his country towards Angola. He accused them of warmongering, slave-trading and imbibing strong drink. '2

Khama's appeal got short shrift from the British in direct response. But the British came to see Khama as a key ally in keeping open the corridor for commerce and labour supplies between Kimberley and the Zambezi. Khama reciprocated the goodwill. Referring to the British, he told the 'Dopper' Boers: 'I shall count it the proudest day of my life to have an alliance with such a nation, and to have come
under its protection. They pay us wages when we work for them at the Diamond Fields, and then Boers rob us of our honest earnings on the way home. 3

Such letters and correspondence from Khama were printed in British official 'blue books' and in evangelical journals overseas. He comes across in such sources as one of the few African rulers who clearly saw what the whites were doing ten or twenty years before the colonial axe fell. An example is the speech made by Khama (sympathetically translated into English by an L.M.S. missionary) to Shoshong whites he was expelling for drunkenness in 1876:

When you white men rule in the country then you will do as you like;
at present I rule, and I shall maintain my laws which you insult and despise.

You have insulted and despised me because I am a black man in my [own] town; you do so because you despise black men in your hearts. If you despise us, what do you want here in the country that God has given to us?

Go back to your own country. 14

In 1882, British imperialists like John Mackenzie were alarmed by Boer land-grabbers from the Transvaal making war among the southern Batswana - in the border area with the Transvaal south of the Molopo River. Mackenzie, who was a Liberal politician as well as a Congregational church minister, toured the chapels and chambers of commerce of Britain, drumming up support for British rule over 'Bechuanaland' The most influential recruit to the cause was Joseph Chamberlain, the Birmingham capitalist who led the imperialists in the Liberal Party.

Mackenzie argued for a British colony completely separate from the Cape Colony, with selective immigration of good Christian settlers from Britain who would act as the leaven to raise the level of native development. In 1884 Mackenzie was sent out to set up a protectorate (as a first stage towards a colony), as Britain's first Deputy Commissioner for 'Bechuanaland'. But he was given no powers to remove the Transvaal Boers squatting in the area. So he resigned after four months, and was replaced as part-time Deputy Commissioner by a young Kimberley capitalist called Cecil John Rhodes.

Rhodes encouraged the influx of more Boers from the Transvaal.

Meanwhile Germany had intervened on the west coast of southern Africa, setting up first a protectorate and then a colony known as South West Africa (today called Namibia). This raised the spectre of German and Transvaal territory expanding to meet in the Kalahari. So a British expeditionary force, under General Sir Charles Warren, was sent to expel the Boer 'filibusters' from Bechuanaland. Mackenzie attached himself to the expedition, which arrived from England in Cape Town in December 1884.

In January 1885, Britain informed Germany that it was extending its protectorate over 'Bechuanaland and the Kalahari' as far north as the 22nd parallel - roughly the latitude of Selebi-Phikwe today. Warren and Mackenzie then trekked north, in April and May of 1885, to inform the Batswana living within this area of the change in their fortune. 15
Khama was delighted to see his old mentor. Mackenzie persuaded Khama to make a ‘magnificent offer’ of frontier farmland, to settle the good Christians Mackenzie wanted to see settle, in exchange for British protection against Boers and Matebele (Amandebele in what is today Zimbabwe). Khama made it clear that he would not surrender sovereignty over his own subjects, nor would he allow liquor or sale of land (for freehold tenure) in his territory. But he would assist the British ‘to stop those who attack, or to go after them on the spoor of stolen stock.’

As far as Khama was concerned this was the beginning of negotiations. ‘This may turn out to be an epoch marking event in the history of Mangwato. It may come to nothing at all, or it may result in making this country an English colony. Khama's reply is very cautious, indeed it might be termed indefinite, and he certainly has not taken any irreconcilable step.’ But no reply was ever received from the British government. Nine months later Khama was reported to be saying that he was ready to fight the ‘English’ if they annexed his country for a colony of white settlement, rather than simply ‘protecting’ it.

On the last day of September 1885, the British divided 'Bechuanaland and the Kalahari' in two. The land south of the Molopo River (today in South Africa) was proclaimed the Crown Colony of 'British Bechuanaland'. The land north of the Molopo (today the Republic of Botswana) remained with the status of the 'Bechuanaland Protectorate.'

On his return to Scotland, Mackenzie poured his energies into writing a two-volume work entitled Austral Africa: Losing It or Ruling It. Its ideas were out of step with the times. It called for the development of southern Africa through the collaboration of black and white, combining what was best from European and African civilizations. Mackenzie looked forward to a new society which he believed was evolving in southern Africa. In 1871 he had quoted with approval the words of Charles Dilke about Native Americans and applied them to Native Africans: 'Let them intermingle with the whites, living, farming, along with them, intermarrying if possible.' It was a premature vision, but one which Khama's grandson, Seretse, was to play a large part in reviving in the next century.

The Batswana states of the Bechuanaland Protectorate (B.P.) began to lose their sovereign powers after British imperial legislation in 1890-91. The states first lost ownership of sparsely populated lands, and then control over the few whites within their 'reserves'. But they retained communal ownership of 'tribal' lands and control over their indigenous subjects.

To the north of the B.P., Rhodes's British South Africa Company set up the colonies known as Southern and Northern 'Rhodesia'. As prime minister of the Cape Colony, Rhodes made plans for British Bechuanaland to be incorporated in the Cape Colony in 1895, while the Bechuanaland Protectorate was to be incorporated into 'Rhodesia.

Kgosi Khama of the Bangwato, together with Kgosi Sebele of the Bakwena and Kgosi Bathoen of the Bangwaketse, responded by sailing to Britain to appeal directly to the British government. After a Mackenzie-type tour of
Britain, arousing support in chapels and chambers of commerce, they confronted the Secretary of State (i.e. minister) for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain. Chamberlain had just got the job as a reward for taking his Unionist followers out of the Liberal Party and into the Conservative Party.

Public support for the three 'kings' obliged Chamberlain to guarantee continued imperial administration of their three 'reserves'. Rhodes took the new arrangement highly personally: 'It is humiliating to be utterly beaten by three niggers.' Rhodesian annexation of the B.P. was subsequently shelved indefinitely, when Chamberlain had to dissociate himself from Rhodes after the failure of the Jameson Raid. (The raid was an attempt by Rhodes's company to seize the Transvaal by a military expedition from bases in Bechuanaland.)

The high point of the visit to Britain by Khama, Sebele and Bathoen was their reception by Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle in November 1895. She gave each of them a copy of the New Testament in Setswana. For their wives she gave each man one of the silk scarves she received in annual tribute from Afghanistan - usually reserved as wedding presents for Victoria's relatives among the crowned heads of Europe. On the fly-leaf of Khama's Bible, Victoria inscribed a dedication in her own hand: 'The Secret of Khama's greatness.'

Khama was a widower at the time, and gave the scarf to his eldest daughter Bessie on his return home. Today a myth persists among some Bangwato that Seretse Khama, by marrying Ruth Williams in 1948, was fulfilling the promise made by the Queen of England in 1895 to find his grandfather a wife from among her people.

'Khama the Great' achieved a unique status in the British Empire as an African monarch enjoying strong moral support in the imperial heartland. The backbone of that support in Britain was among Christian Nonconformists and in the Temperance Movement, but it also extended through Liberals to sympathetic Tory aristocrats and ecclesiastics in Establishment circles.

Warren remarked of Khama: 'I look upon him as having been one of the big men of the nineteenth century.' Another of Khama's visitors, the future Lord Lugard, who came to Khama's town in 1896, remarked: '[Although] I am not in favour of eating with black men . . . I know of no one else in Africa whom I would wish to ask for lunch, and treat as an honoured guest and be proud to entertain. He is such a gentleman.

The prestige of Khama continued to be a factor in British reluctance to hand over the Bechuanaland Protectorate to either Southern Rhodesia or South Africa. The Union of South Africa was formed in 1910 to unite the Cape Colony, the Transvaal, Natal and the Orange River Colony. The Union expected, pleaded, and sometimes demanded to incorporate the B.P. for nearly half a century. But, as the Secretary of State for the Colonies remarked in 1913: 'So long as Khama is alive the bare suggestion of handing him over to the Union of South Africa would bring the whole missionary world and others upon me at once.'
This is not to say that Khama's relations with British officials 'on the spot' were always unproblematic. Five months before his death in 1923 he was complaining: 'I receive nothing of the good laws of England but oppression from the Officials.' As Khama had done with his own father, Sekgoma I, so too did Khama quarrel with his son and heir, also named Sekgoma. Sekgoma II was the only surviving son of Khama by his first wife, Mogatsa Elizabeta, the daughter of Tshukudu. She was more commonly known, following the Setswana tradition of being named after the first child, as Mma-Bessie (or Mma-Besi).

Khama and Mma-Bessie had been married by a German missionary on May 22nd, 1862, when Khama was about 28 and she was 16. Mma-Bessie then gave birth to four children in quick succession - three girls, Bessie, Babone and Pidio; and a boy, Sekgoma. Thereafter she bore three more daughters and two more sons, of whom only two daughters lived. Mma-Bessie herself died in December 1889, at the age of 44, six weeks after the birth of her last child. A photograph taken earlier in that year shows a tired and overweight pregnant woman in a shiny dark silk dress and feathered hat, frowning in the sunlight.23

Bessie happily took over her mother's role as mohumagadi, the queen or queen-mother whose role was to act as a mother to the people as well as aide and comforter to the kgosi. But Sekgoma dwelt on his mother's death, and even entertained ideas that somehow his father, and even his sister and her able and ambitious husband, Ratshosa, had killed his mother. Khama engaged Sekgoma's mind by sending him off for further schooling abroad. The local elementary school did not, at that time, go much beyond elementary reading and writing. Khama wanted to send his son to England for education. But in a way that presaged the later experience of Sekgoma's son Seretse, British officials and missionaries dissuaded Khama from sending Sekgoma to England for fear that it would somehow 'spoil' him. Sekgoma was instead sent to the Cape Colony's most prestigious college, Lovedale Institution, on the Cape's eastern borders. During the vacations he stayed in Cape Town, with the Canadian historian George McCall Theal as his host and tutor. Theal was a former teacher at Lovedale, who acted as official archivist and historiographer to the Governor.24

When Sekgoma returned home in 1893 after two years in the Cape, he spoke and wrote English like an educated gentleman and was put to work in his father's secretariat. Sekgoma, however, soon came into conflict with his sister Bessie and her husband Ratshosa. Ratshosa was the locally-educated headman of a small ward within the state, who had married Bessie ten or twelve years earlier. He had risen in Khama's estimation as a scribe, soldier and adept speaker in kgotla, and had been confirmed in his role of chief secretary around 1890 when his wife also took charge of Khama's household.

Khama put Sekgoma in charge of state administration when he left for England in 1895. Sekgoma was assisted by Khama's trusted brother Seretse in the kgotla and by Ratshosa in the secretariat. By all accounts Sekgoma did rather well. When Khama arrived back in his country at the beginning of 1896, he found his expensively educated son in effective control. At first Khama was proud of his son and delegated more authority to him. But then Khama began to suspect
Sekgoma of copying and hiding away important state papers. There can be no doubt that such suspicions were fed by the jealous Ratshosa. Khama was also becoming increasing irritated over Sekgoma's extra-marital affairs. Sekgoma had abandoned his wife Mma-Oratile, the mother of his daughter Oratile but of no son, on his return from the Cape in 1893. He had then taken up with a daughter of his uncle Seretse. Khama had kept quiet, hoping that the union might be legitimized after formal divorce from Mma-Oratile. Seretse was after all Khama's favourite brother. Marriage between paternal cousins was considered desirable among Batswana royals and rich people - to keep the cattle capital of marriage payments within the lineage.

Now, on his return from England at the beginning of 1896, Khama found that Sekgoma was spending his spare time in the household of another uncle, Kgaman'e. The relationship between Khama and Kgaman'e was uneasy, as they had quarrelled 20 years earlier and had only recently been reconciled. The dispute between father and son came to a head in October 1897. Khama publicly accused Sekgoma of plotting to seize power with Kgaman'e and other dissidents. Khama told the kgotla assembly that he could deny bogosi (chieftainship) to his only son, and could instead, if he wanted to, pass it on to his daughter Bessie, Ratshosa her husband, and their three sons.

Six months later the animosity was so great between Khama and Sekgoma that the Resident Commissioner, senior colonial administrator of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, felt obliged to intervene. The Commissioner, not surprisingly, backed Khama to the hilt. Khama sent Kgaman'e off to live at Shoshong, a royal village and the former capital. Sekgoma and his followers, with their cattle and wagons, went to settle on the southern frontier of the Bangwato Reserve. From there he could continue to visit the Kgaman'e household at Shoshong. Kgaman'e's daughter Serero now became Sekgoma's wife. But she proved unable to bear children, so Sekgoma also took up with her sister Maria.

This was perfectly acceptable in traditional law, but Maria was regarded as a concubine in the monogamous law adopted by Khama. Maria bore Sekgoma two sons. One of them, named Gasetshwarwe, lived into adulthood, and was to challenge Seretse Khama's right to succession. Sekgoma himself ignored these children, never recognizing them as legitimate heirs. Kgaman'e became fully reconciled with Khama by 1904 and Sekgoma ceased to visit the Kgaman'e household.25

Sekgoma now broke the mould of royal love and marital affairs confined to close relatives. He took up with the great love of his life, a beautiful young woman named Lenkeme (or Lehuma). But she was a rank outsider in the social hierarchy. It seems that Lenkeme came from among the Bateti (Khoe-speaking) people of northern Ngwato country, living along the Boteti (Botletle) River. Before firearms were imported in large quantity in the midnineteenth century, the Bateti were respected for their bravery and skill in hunting elephants with spears. But they had lost most of their livestock to intruders as well as their advantage in hunting skills, and were now regarded as inferior 'Basarwa'. They lived in the style of
impoverished Bangwato, in small villages, digging wells for their few livestock in the dry river bed.26
Sekgoma proposed to marry Lenkeme formally, and thus to make her his mohumagadi - queen or great wife, and mother of his heir. But such a proposal to marry a Mosarwa royals and aristocrats among his followers. Many of them now left Sekgoma and returned to show their allegiance to Khama as great Kgosi in the new Ngwato capital at Serowe (founded 1902).

Today a not uncommon whisper among some Batswana is that Seretse Khama was half Mosarwa. Perhaps this idea was started by his enemies in 1948. But by the time he became President it seems to have been taken more as a credential of Seretse's common touch. The origin of the idea may well be a confusion with the love story of Lenkeme and Sekgoma Khama. (Some people point to Seretse's large backside in later life as evidence of Basarwa ancestry, but it was clearly an inheritance from his father and his paternal grandmother Mma-Bessie.) Seretse Khama's mother was, as we shall see, a Mongwato royal, from the same Tshukudu family as Mma-Bessie. The fact remains that Sekgoma Khama almost took a beautiful 'outsider' for his lawful wife. Though Seretse hardly knew his father, if at all, it is strange how many parallels there were to be between their lives.

In 1907 Sekgoma and Lenkeme and their remaining followers moved north to live at Nekati, among the Khoe and Bakalanga of the Nata river on the eastern side of the Makgadikgadi (Makarikari) salt pans. Sekgoma Khama now had his own reserve, on the northern border but separate from the Bangwato Reserve, and was regarded by the British as a chief independent of his father. Sekgoma had his own L.M.S. evangelist and his own white policeman. The policeman, Arnold Weinholt Hodgson, was to publish a well-known memoir, Trekking the Great Thirst (1912), which presents Sekgoma in an affectionate light, though Hodgson's main interest was big game hunting.27

Over the coming years Sekgoma quarrelled with more and more of his followers, who left Nekati to rejoin Khama at Serowe. Rev Seekano (Seakano) fled because of the attempts of Oratile, Sekgoma's formidable daughter, barely 20, to control church and school.28 Others left in protest against Sekgoma's restrictions and heavy fines on drinking liquor, which outKhama'd even Khama. Sekgoma became increasingly disposed to rejoin Khama himself.

The clear issue that divided father and son remained that of a suitable wife and mother of the heir to the Khama dynasty. Sekgoma failed to persuade Khama to do the work for him of finding an acceptable mohumagadi. In 1911 Sekgoma set up house at Nekati with a woman from the royal family of the Bangwaketse of southern Botswana, the daughter of the widow who had briefly been Khama's second wife before she died. No doubt Sekgoma assumed that Khama was bound to approve of the match. But he did not.29

In 1913 Sekgoma married his daughter Oratile to her cousin Simon Ratshosa, the son of Bessie and Ratshosa, at Serowe. Nor did this action win Khama over.

Meanwhile, in 1900, Khama had himself married a 21-year-old schoolteacher named Semane Setlhoko. Semane had been handpicked for Khama by his
daughter Bessie Ratshosa. Many Bangwato looked askance at the marriage, considering that Semane came from inferior origins. Semane's ancestors were Babirwa and Baseleka, inhabitants of the Tswapong hills on the edge of the Limpopo valley, once known for their skills as ironsmiths but since regarded as semi-servile folk. What qualified Semane to be Khama's mohumagadi were her achieved rather than hereditary characteristics. She was a committed Christian and temperance advocate as well as a teacher, who could thus meaningfully lead the women of the Bangwato in a modern world. Besides she was also beautiful, intelligent, youthful and potentially fertile.

Khama was aged about 65 when he married Semane. A son, named Tshekedi, was born five years later. Tongues not unnaturally wagged at the time about the paternity of the child from so aged a parent. But no one today doubts that Tshekedi proved his Khama heredity in physique and innate ability. In L907 Khama recognized Tshekedi as his heir and thereby disowned Sekgoma, by signing a will drawn up by a lawyer in Mafikeng (Mafeking), the administrative capital of the B.P. The will left the bulk of 'my estate, movable and immovable' to Tshekedi. Khama's will, lodged with the Master of the Bechuanaland Protectorate Court at Mafikeng, was never revised. It was to become an extra complication in the dispute between Tshekedi Khama and Sekgoma's son Seretse Khama in 1949-50.

In 1916, old Khama was reported seriously ill at Serowe after a horse riding accident. This gave Sekgoma the opportunity to return temporarily from his Nekati exile to sit at his father's bedside, and to collaborate with his son-in-law Simon Ratshosa in running 'tribal' administration. Sekgoma also took the opportunity to make friends with 11-year-old Tshekedi. Sekgoma's new show of consideration and cooperative spirit impressed Khama. Thus began the reconciliation of father and son. The passage of time then softened their attitudes towards each other still further.

In 1920, Khama sealed his reconciliation with Sekgoma in public. He introduced him as his heir to a packed kgotla assembly at Serowe. He then travelled with Sekgoma to Mafikeng and as far as Cape Town, to formally introduce the heir to the Resident Commissioner of the B.P. and to Britain's High Commissioner for South(ern) Africa respectively. Immediately after Khama reinstated Sekgoma as heir, he married him off to a young woman of his choice. Khama had chosen his niece Tebogo, the daughter of his trusted brother Kebailele, who had stood by Khama since their turbulent youth.

The marriage, conducted in the church building of the Bangwato nation at Serowe during September 1920, was a sumptuous affair. The bridegroom in top-hat and bride and bridesmaids in white dresses arrived at the church in automobiles; and there was plenty of food and non-alcoholic drinks afterwards for thousands of people - including 200 European guests.

The birth of Seretse Goitsebeng Khama, ten months later in July 1921, sealed the marriage between Sekgoma and Tebogo - and symbolically completed the reconciliation of Khama with Sekgoma. While the baby Seretse remained with his mother near the royal household at Serowe, his father returned north to Nekati to
make arrangements for the great trek of all his people and possessions back to Serowe. Khama sent extra wagons and, in May 1922, all the followers of Sekgoma were enthusiastically welcomed home to Serowe. 3; Early one morning in February 1923, Khama was caught in a downpour of rain during his customary daily horse ride. He contracted pneumonia and was confined to bed on February 15th, complaining of a 'chill in the stomach and nausea'. Firm to the end, he refused all alcoholic stimulants. The end came at 7.45 a.m. on February 21st, 1923, only six days after he was taken ill. Khama was buried in a new royal graveyard on Serowe hill, in the shade of tall red rocks balanced upon the hillside.32 Sekgoma Khama was installed as Kgosi Sekgoma UI soon after the funeral by public declaration in kgotla, in accordance with Setswana custom. His uncle Mphoeng and his cousin Gorewang Kgamane, in their capacity as senior royal headmen, then invited the Resident Commissioner, James MacGregor, to install Sekgoma II with his colonial designation as chief of the 'Bamangwato'. MacGregor, a German-educated Scots enthusiast for Sesotho and Setswana customs and traditions, duly appeared in ceremonial dress at the Serowe kgotla on April 19th, 1923. He exchanged presents with Sekgoma. Sekgoma gave MacGregor an extremely rare Sengwato traditional spear and a lavishly decorated kaross (tailored fur) to be passed on to King George V in England. The ceremony was filmed by Albert Carick of African Film Productions. Sekgoma concluded his speech by addressing the colonial authorities in typically bluff fashion: 'If you can live in friendship with me, I will deal with you as my father did; if you have anything to say, say it straight to me and not behind me.' Sekgoma's reign was to be little more than two years. He was 58 years old, tall and hefty with broad facial features - the physical build of his mother combined with the extraordinary eyes of his father. Those who knew him also remark on the physical similarities with his son Seretse. Both walked with the same dignified, deliberate steps. 'Sekgoma had presence" remarks one informant: 'When you saw him in a crowd you immediately knew he was the Kgosi' Sekgoma was a gregarious individual, riding round the town on horseback to visit people. He was generous to a fault - not just handing out food to the needy, but also loaning out mafisa cattle to families and allowing them to keep the calves, and donating more than one motor car to European traders who aided his administration. The long years in exile had cooled a hot temper, but he could still be a harsh judge in kgotla in handing out sentences of corporal punishment - though but rarely, it is said, to women. A contemporary praise-poem (leboko), in archaic Setswana, warns people who approach this son of Mma-Bessie's Tshukudu lineage to do so carefully, lest they be bruised: Mmaphiri wa koko ja ga Tshukudu Hyena of the lineage of Tshukudu A gatagatang makgabana Tread gingerly on the pebbles (when approaching her) Matihare a na le mokgwasa Leaves rustle underfoot13
Sekgoma was an outdoors man who preferred hunting on horseback to sitting hearing cases in kgotla - which was one reason he had enjoyed his exile at Nekati. Like his son in later years, he could put away prodigious quantities of red meat, relishing the fattiest parts. His diet probably did not change much from Nekati, but his daily occupation became much more sedentary at Serowe. It is clear that at first he tried to take his new administrative responsibilities seriously.34

In May 1923, Sekgoma was asked by the B.P. administration to deal with the question of Khama's estate. Sekgoma was adamant that the reconciliation with his father had nullified the will of 1907, because his late father had given him verbally what he had previously given in writing to Tshekedi. Sekgoma proved to be even-handed in actually administering the estate, trying to follow the spirit of his father's wishes. When dividing the estate in kgotla, he allotted Semane about £3 000 instead of the £1 500 mentioned in the will, plus the cattle at eight cattle-posts. Semane's son, Tshekedi, was thus assured of a large personal fortune. The Resident Commissioner was happy with the settlement, writing in August to the Master of the Bechuanaland Protectorate court that, according to Sekgoma, Khama had 'amended the will verbally after reconciliation35 The question of the Khama will seemed settled once and for ever.

Semane continued to live in the royal household, despite the suggestion of Sekgoma's sister Baboni that Semane be evicted. Sekgoma became the guardian of Semane's son, 18-year-old Tshekedi, who stayed with them in his vacations from Sekgoma's old school at Lovedale in the Cape. Tshekedi later recalled how Sekgoma treated him more like a son than a brother a pattern that Tshekedi was to repeat with his nephew Seretse after Sekgoma's death.36

The Lovedale-educated Ratshosa brothers, whose father had died in 1917, became even closer to Sekgoma as kgosi. Simon Ratshosa, married to Sekgoma's assertive daughter Oratile, became Sekgoma's principal secretary as well as heading the national or 'tribal' schools. He was assisted in his administration by Johnnie and Obeditsa Ratshosa, who acted as interpreters, translators and typists in Setswana and English.

The Ratshosas fed Sekgoma with rumours that Phethu Mphoeng was plotting to bewitch him or even to assassinate him at a "bioscope' (cinema) show in Serowe. Phethu Mphoeng was the forceful regional chief (mmeomela-kgosi) of Mmadinare, which he had ruled for two decades with his brother Oteng Mphoeng as local schoolteacher and businessman. He was also another son-in-law of Khama, having married Khama's daughter Milly. Now that Khama was dead, and his father Mphoeng was the senior royal uncle at Serowe, Phethu Mphoeng seems to have become reckless, spoiling for a fight with the Ratshosas. He was particularly vocal about the waste of money, raised by a 'tribal levy' (lekgetho), on commissioning an elaborate memorial to Khama on the Serowe hillside. He also did not care for the maintenance of Khama's ban on the brewing of millet or sorghum beer (bojalwa), about which both Sekgoma II and the Ratshosas were fanatical.37
On December 21st, 1923, Sekgoma brought the matter of Phethu Mphoeng before the great kgotla at Serowe, alleging that Phethu was setting himself up as an independent kgosi at Mmadinare. The Ratshosas orchestrated a chorus of complaints from the assembled citizens; and Sekgoma was given full backing by the colonial authorities. The High Commissioner's banning order of January 30th, 1924, exiled to Nekati the Mphoeng brothers and their allies the Raditladi brothers.38

Sekgoma appears to have become rather relaxed in 1924, leaving important matters in the state secretariat to the Ratshosas and more mundane issues in kgotla for his cousin Gorewang Kgamane to preside over. The three brothers dealt with all state correspondence and even kept the files in their houses. (There was, as yet, no 'tribal office' building at the back of the Serowe kgotla.) But Sekgoma was to exhaust himself in mid-1925, making preparations for the visit of the heir to the British throne, David (later Edward VIII) Prince of Wales.

The most conspicuous achievement of preparation was the completion of the Khama memorial in the royal graveyard on Serowe hill, which the prince was to unveil. This consisted of a life-sized bronze figure of a phuti or duiker, the national symbol of the Bangwato. The other major preparation for the prince was the blasting of a new road along the hillside to take the prince's party from the kgotla to the European trading area of Serowe. In the event, the Prince of Wales was accompanied to Serowe by numerous officials and hangers-on, as well as by a press circus. All complained bitterly about the lack of alcohol in Khama's hot dry country and dashed back whenever possible to Palapye station with its hotel bar reserved for Europeans. 19

The Ratshosa brothers' star fell in June 1925 after word got to Sekgoma, awaiting the Prince of Wales at Palapye railway station, that Simon Ratshosa had been bad-mouthing him as a weak and ineffective kgosi. It began to dawn on Sekgoma that he was caught in a political web spun by the Ratshosas. He discovered that Simon Ratshosa had even arranged to see the High Commissioner without his prior knowledge, to make further representations against the Bechuanaland Protectorate being incorporated into the Union of South Africa.

Phethu Mphoeng took immediate advantage of the situation, and was allowed to come to Serowe to make a full apology in the kgotla for any disrespect he had ever shown to Kgosi Sekgoma II. He also undertook not to allow the brewing or consumption of beer. On July 4th, Sekgoma told the Resident Commissioner: 'I do forgive Phethu.' The Mphoengs and Raditladis were quickly allowed back home, where they presented themselves as the kgosi's closest allies against the Ratshosas.40

On July 30th, 1925, Sekgoma was suddenly taken ill. As a good judge of horseflesh, he had gone down to Parr's store in central Serowe to inspect some new horses, when he 'suddenly got a peculiar staring look in his eyes.' He turned absent-mindedly towards the Bechuanaland Trading Association (B.T.A.) store, tripped over a log and walked straight into a pole. He was then helped to the car of the trader George Smith, in which he had two rapid seizures, gnashing his teeth, a bloody froth effusing from his mouth. He was driven home to bed
comatose, his eyes turned leftward. He recovered that afternoon, but was heard 'making senseless remarks about an orange tree.' The next morning, in the presence of Dr. Drew, the local colonial government doctor, Sekgoma had what Drew thought was a typical epileptic fit. But by the next day he had recovered. He told Drew that he had had a couple of such fits previously, at two-yearly intervals, when out in the veld travelling or hunting.

In the early hours of Sunday, August 23rd, Sekgoma had three more fits in quick succession, at a cattle post 50 kilometres from Serowe. He was also now suffering pain in passing urine. Drew was joined by the senior government doctor from Francistown. They diagnosed 'major epilepsy combined with urethral stricture,' prescribed the conventional bromide treatment for epilepsy, and sent off a blood sample for the Wasserman syphilis test. Sekgoma's condition worsened as the bromide took effect on his brain; he was confused still further by suggestions that he had been bewitched. Finally, on September 9th, he was put on a train for Cape Town, at B.P. government expense, with Drew and headman Gaofetoge Mathiba as companions. He was admitted to Victoria Hospital at Wynberg on the 14th. Gorewang Kgamane was left to act as kgosi in Sekgoma's place at Serowe.

A neurologist and a surgeon immediately attended to Sekgoma. The good news was that Sekgoma was suffering from neither epilepsy nor syphilis. The bad news was that there was no precise diagnosis or treatment. He was assumed to be suffering from premature senile dementia or from mental and emotional strain, for which there was no medical cure. Even the urethral stricture could not be operated upon until infection had cleared up. The patient meanwhile became increasingly agitated and wanted to return home. Not surprisingly he developed the idea that 'all the doctors in the country were gathered around him to bleed him of what money they can.'

By September 29th, Sekgoma Khama had become violent and unmanageable, refusing to cooperate with doctors and spurning medicines. His daughter Oratile Ratshosa came to his bedside and it was agreed to send him back to Serowe, where Drew could do minor surgery on the urethra. Sekgoma returned home to Serowe accompanied by two white male South African military nurses to constrain him. Drew sent word ahead that all guns should be removed from the royal residence before Sekgoma arrived, so that he could not inflict injury on himself or others.

The town of Serowe had become politically disturbed in the absence of Sekgoma, as winter gave way to the hot dry winds of spring. Simon Ratshosa had even used his connections with the press to attack the rule of Gorewang Kgamane, placing an article in the Johannesburg Star newspaper on October 8th. Now, on Sekgoma's return in an obviously more bewitched state than he had left, political factions lined themselves up on the question of the kgosi's medical treatment. A minority of 'progressives' led by the Ratshosas and by Semane wanted to continue with Western medical treatment. A majority of traditionalists, led by Gorewang Kgamane and the Mphoengs and including at first the acting European...
magistrate, favoured using Setswana medicine as well. If Sekgoma was traditionally bewitched, only a traditional medicine man could remove the spell. The most obvious perpetrator of witchcraft would have been Semane, Khama's widow, in order to place her son Tshekedi in the ascendancy. But Sekgoma himself was anxious to scoff such suggestions, openly maintaining excellent relations with Semane and Tshekedi. Semane was to prove Sekgoma's most dedicated nurse right to the end. Sekgoma also wanted Tshekedi to succeed him as regent until Seretse came of age. Meanwhile, Oratile Ratshosa pressed herself forward as an alternative kgosi, and Sekgoma's sister Baboni pressed the case of Sekgoma's illegitimate son Gasetshwarwe.

When arrangements were made for the minor operation on Sekgoma's urethra at Serowe, Gorewang Kgamanie called a major kgotla assembly to debate the issue on October 29th, 1925. Almost a thousand people attended - mainly older men but also, as had become accepted in the reign of Khania, women such as Oratile who were directly involved in the case. All had the right to speak; Oratile spoke up for the doctors who had been treating her father. Even the Raditladis supported the Ratshosas' viewpoint. But the case for exclusive Western medical treatment was weak. Johnnie Ratshosa asserted that the great Khama had dismissed all dingaka (traditional doctors). Boiditswe, himself an ngaka, claimed that Khama had once called him in to treat his children for earache. He now asserted confidently that he could treat Sekgoma too. After a lengthy debate the majority view prevailed, and the Western doctors were dismissed. The two white male nurses were paid off and Setswana dingaka were called in.

Within a week Sekgoma was on his feet and appeared to have made a miraculous recovery, 'sane and more or less normal.' He threw himself into kgotla work, and complained about the exhorbitant attendance fees he was having to pay Dr Drew. He also wrote to Dr Modiri Molema, a Motswana 'Western' doctor at Mafikeng and pioneer nationalist intellectual. He asked Molema to resume regular visits to the Bangwato Reserve, and enclosed a cheque of £360 for a new car.

However, on Friday, November 13th, Sekgoma collapsed once more. Semane fought almost physically with the attendant dingaka to nurse him. Drew and the L.M.S. missionary, Rev Haydon Lewis, were called in. They found that Sekgoma's kidneys had ceased to function. Sekgoma died late on Sunday morning after nine hours of continuous fits. He was 61 years old, two years older than his son was when he died half a century later.

When news of his death spread through the twisting narrow paths of Serowe, people began to congregate around the kgotla. Drew and Haydon Lewis were jostled in public. An angry crowd of women, urged on by Khama's daughters Baboni and Milly, burst into the house which Semane occupied at the royal lodge, abusing her and accusing her of witchcraft. They broke down the door frame and scattered the contents of her trunks on the floor. Semane fled to take refuge in the L.M.S. mission house next to Thataganyane rock, while Gorewang Kgamanie fled to the camp of the colonial police. The Ratshosas fired their rifles over the heads
of protesters. But violent attitudes were dampened by a sudden downpour of rain, and headmen then restored order around the kgotla. Two women were later charged with threatening Semane and Gorewang respectively.

Sekgoma was buried next to his father at the royal graveyard on November 17th, 1925, with about 3000 people in attendance, including the Resident Commissioner - by now Jules Ellenberger, a Swiss-French Protestant missionary's son born in a luxuriously appointed Lesotho cave. In the presence of Ellenberger, the morafe ('tribe' or nation) decided that Tshekedi would have to return from Fort Hare College at Lovedale to be regent (Motshwarelela-kgosi) to the four-year-old Seretse. Until Tshekedi arrived, Gorewang Kgamane would act as regent with the assistance of a council of 14 dignitaries - including Simon and Johnnie Ratshosa.

The Bangwato decided to honour their kgosi by erecting a cottage hospital at Serowe, for the provision of Western medicine under morafe patronage. The Sekgoma Memorial Hospital, on a plateau south of the town, was to take a year to build. It was financed from the tribal levy which had been collected and given to the Prince of Wales as 'food for the journey' in July 1925 and graciously returned. Sekgoma's death was a mystery to both Western and traditional healers. It has therefore been portrayed by the historian Michael Crowder as a cultural clash between two systems of medicine. But there is another layer of explanation more germane to the life of Seretse Khama.

Lady Khama recognized in the story told by Michael Crowder all the symptoms of diabetes, from which her husband and other members of MmaBessie's Tshukudu lineage have suffered. The hormone insulin, secreted by the pancreas and controlling levels of blood sugar, had been discovered only in 1921, but it was barely understood even by medical researchers in the 1920s. Diabetes was obviously unknown among Western medical specialists in South Africa by 1925. Hence Western medicine for Sekgoma Khama proved to be a fallacious system of belief and practice that harmed rather than helped him.

In later years Seretse could only recall his grandfather, who died before he was two, and not his father who had died two years later. It is said that whenever the small child saw his grandfather approaching, he would rush to meet him at the gate. Khama delighted in grabbing and lifting his grandson high in the air. He also used to lift Seretse onto the saddle of his horse. "Seretse inherited the robust looks of his father and his grandmother MmaBessie, rather than of his lean and graceful grandfather. He also developed more of his father's warmth of character, by contrast with the coolness of Tshekedi - the young uncle who was to take on the role of Seretse's guardian for the next two decades. It was Tshekedi who was to be the parental model against which Seretse eventually rebelled.

Chapter 2

CHILDHOOD

1925-39
Seretse's early childhood years were spent in the royal household or kgosing of Serowe at the back of the kgotla, in its compound of neat buildings overlooked by the great rocks of the Khama memorial on the hillside above. Seretse lived in one thatched house with his widowed mother Tebogo, and his little brother Botsweletse. His uncle Tshekedi, the regent, still a bachelor, stayed in another house with his own mother, Khama's widow Semane.

Tebogo, conscious that her son was to be the future kgosi, tried to instil in Seretse what she regarded as the royal virtues of honesty and attention to duty. Tebogo's friends who are still alive tell us how strict she was with Seretse, finding fault with him and punishing him for minor offences.

Seretse used to escape from his mother's strictness to the more kindly regime in the household of Tebogo's own mother, Mma-Gaopotlake. The old lady had lost her brilliant son Gaopotlake, still unmarried, in the great influenza epidemic of 1919, and no doubt spoilt her grandsons all the more because of the loss. Much of his time as an infant and small boy, however, was spent with nannies rather than with his mother or grandmother. Tebogo had selected girls as nannies for Seretse, from the families of household servants. Extra care was taken in raising Seretse as he was generally considered to be a sickly child. The nanny to whom Seretse was most attached was a young Mosarwa or Khoe woman called Karu.

Though Tebogo was strict with her sons, to others she appeared a vivacious young widow. Her brother-in-law Tshekedi, somewhat strait-laced and puritanical in his youth, regarded her with a disapproving eye. It was absolutely out of the question that Tshekedi would think of marrying his brother's widow - the tradition known to missionaries, since it was also found in the Bible, as the 'levirate'. Seretse's younger brother Botsweletse died in 1926, when Seretse was five. The sadness of this loss may explain why Tebogo, deprived of normal marital chances by her status as a mohumagadi, turned to a man. Her consort was Gaofetoge 0. Mathiba, a headman and tax collector who had accompanied her husband Kgosi Sekgoma II to Cape Town in 1925. He had presumably been one of Sekgoma's best friends.

Tebogo gave birth to a daughter, Seretse's half-sister Naledi, in 1927. Tshekedi expressed outrage and expelled Tebogo from the royal household, presumably to live with her mother. However, the quarrel was short-lived and Tebogo, with Seretse, moved back into the kgosing. Gaofetoge was after all a powerful political figure, and Tshekedi needed all the political allies he could get. We do not know what six-year-old Seretse thought of the whole affair. But it is evident that, though he was subsequently devoted to Naledi as his sister, Seretse resented Gaofetoge Mathiba by the time he was a young man.

At about this time Tshekedi began to play a greater role in the upbringing of Seretse. He wanted Seretse to be a Mongwato prince who knew his place at the top of society, and a Motswana man who cherished the Setswana way of life. Tshekedi therefore brought into the royal household carefully selected small boys to grow up with Seretse. These included both royal relatives and relatives acquired by Khama's policy of marrying off his daughters to commoner headmen.
The small boys included Seretse's paternal cousin Lenyeletse Seretse and his maternal cousin Dikgakgamatso Kebailele, both descended from Sekgoma I, and his paternal cousin Serogola Lekhutile, the son of the Botlalothe headman. Such boyhood companions, it was hoped, would develop strong bonds of political support for Seretse as kgosi in the future.

Like Tebogo, Tshekedi expected high standards of moral character from Seretse. He wanted Seretse to maintain and perpetuate the standards set by the great Khama, which Tshekedi himself was trying to emulate, rather than the mores of Sekgoma II.

When Sekgoma II died, Tshekedi had been only 20 years old, a student about to take his matriculation (university entrance) examination for Fort Hare Native College in South Africa's eastern Cape Province. He had been called back home by Jules Ellenberger, the B.P. Resident Commissioner, on November 24th, 1925, just before the examination. Tshekedi himself, his mother and the principal of Fort Hare had all been against his withdrawal from college before the completion of a Bachelor of Arts degree. Following the advice of Khama before he died, Tshekedi would have gone on a tour of Europe to broaden his experience of the world after graduating at Fort Hare. But all this was not to be.

It was the will of the nation of the Bangwato, as expressed through assemblies of male elders in kgotla, which insisted on Tshekedi's immediate return to assume the regency of the Bangwato until Kgosi Seretse attained his majority. Instead of going to a university, Tshekedi was left to himself to read incessantly and wisely, acquiring a large stock of legal, administrative and political knowledge which would have put doctors of philosophy to shame.

The Ratshosa brothers, having been allies of Tshekedi's mother, Semane, during the events surrounding the death of Kgosi Sekgoma II, expected Tshekedi to be their ally. They prepared themselves to greet Tshekedi off the train from Fort Hare at Palapye, the nearest station to Serowe. But rivals of the Ratshosas such as the Mphoengs got to Tshekedi first. They met him at Mafikeng and travelled on the train together to Mahalapye south of Palapye, from whence they whisked him off by car to Serowe by a direct road avoiding Palapye. Tshekedi presided over his first kgotla on December 19th, 1925, which decided that he should take on the regency. He was then officially installed as regent in the presence of the Resident Commissioner, Jules Ellenberger, on January 1st, 1926.

Phethu Mphoeng spoke up as one of the main sponsors of Tshekedi's regency. The regency council that had ruled somewhat lamely during the interregnum was now abolished. This infuriated Simon Ratshosa, who had presented the council to the world's press, including The Times of London, as an experiment in native democracy.

Four-and-a-half-year-old Seretse appeared in public at Tshekedi's installation, dressed in a Scottish soldier suit. He wore a kilt of the Black Watch regimental tartan and a long tasselled sporran. A photograph taken at the installation shows the kilted Seretse looking somewhat distracted, next to the black-draped widow figure of Semane, her restraining hand on his left shoulder.
Tshekedi’s acceptance of Seretse as the true heir to the bogosi (chieftainship, kingship or government) of the Bangwato was beyond doubt. But he realized that he had 20 years of rule ahead of him before Seretse took over, and that he had to stamp out dissidents and pretenders to the throne if he was to stay in power. Immediately Tshekedi assumed the regency, the B.P. administration raised the question of Khama’s will. Tshekedi appeared to accept that the 1907 will, which bestowed Khama’s patrimony on himself, had been superceded by the reconciliation between Khama II and Sekgoma Khama. The Resident Magistrate of Serowe informed the Resident Commissioner’s office that Tshekedi had made provision for all of Khama’s property to be passed to Seretse. (This was to become a point at issue again in 1949-50.)

Tshekedi’s own agenda was to silence the coalition of Ratshosa brothers and powerful Khama daughters who had teamed up against him. Tshekedi’s half-sisters Baboni, Mmakgama and Milly had never accepted his right to rule over them as regent, because his mother had been junior to theirs. Tshekedi, they said, was merely their servant. Seretse’s half-sister Oratile Ratshosa felt likewise. The Khama women made all sorts of claims on the legacies of Khama and Sekgoma, and challenged Tshekedi’s right to hold and administer these estates in trust for Seretse.

Young Tshekedi played on the annoyance of his hostile older relatives and provoked them into indiscretion. His purge of the Ratshosas began with the dismissal of Johnnie Ratshosa from the post of Tribal Secretary. This was done, over the advice of the B.P. administration, ‘publicly and preemptorily.’ On Easter Monday, 1926, Tshekedi summoned the Ratshosa brothers out of a wedding that they were attending to meet him in kgotla, where he was organizing obligatory communal labour for public works. The three middle-aged men, conscious of their privileges as ‘royals’ and *sons of chiefs’ refused to come at the behest of the young regent. So they were dragged into kgotla and sentenced to a public flogging for defiance of the kgosi. Johnnie was beaten. Simon and Obeditse escaped from the kgotla to get their rifles, and returned firing furiously and aiming for Tshekedi. The houses of the Ratshosas, containing much valuable furniture and equipment, were burnt down that evening on the orders of the regent, in accordance with traditional punishment. Simon and Obeditse were handed over to the colonial police, and were subsequently tried in a colonial court for attempted murder. Found guilty, they were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour at Francistown, the white farming enclave on the Rhodesian border north-east of the Bangwato Reserve. After their release from prison they were to continue in exile there.‘

There was still the threat to Tshekedi of the daughters of Khama. It was rumoured that they had recruited wizards from Southern Rhodesia to poison him. Tshekedi therefore took the precaution of only eating food prepared by a trusted cook, and posted guards on his household water supply. Tshekedi then managed to persuade the Queen Regent of the Bangwaketse in the south of the B.P., Mohumagadi Ntebogang, to take his dissident half-sisters into exile in her territory.9
Seretse's half-sister Oratile had her own battle with Tshekedi, which she also lost - resulting in her joining her husband Simon Rathsosa in exile in Francistown. Much to her fury, Tshekedi had been made executor of the will of her father, Sekgoma II. She unsuccessfully challenged Tshekedi’s right to act in this capacity, and then turned her energies into trying to obtain as much property as she could from the estate. She claimed 5 295 head of cattle, 2 500 head of small stock (sheep and goats), and £15 450 in cash - indeed a fortune by contemporary standards, and an indication of the considerable wealth amassed within the Khama family. Her claim was supported by a will of Sekgoma II, dated 1921, which her Johannesburg attorney J.J. van den Bergh produced from his office only in July 1926, apologizing for not having previously lodged it with the Master of the B.P. Court at Mafikeng. Tshekedi disputed the 1921 will, and claimed somewhat ingenuously that it would be invalid anyway in local law, both Setswana and Roman-Dutch, which did not recognize a woman’s property rights after marriage. Oratile's case was first heard in the colonial court at Palapye, and eventually reached a Special Court of the Bechuanaland Protectorate in Lobatse in June 1930. The case turned on the legality of Sekgoma II's 1921 will, as it had not been lodged with the Master at Mafikeng until after his death. The Special Court's judgement was that the will was invalid because it had been lodged too late. Oratile then served notice of appeal to the Privy Council in London, the highest court of appeal in the British Empire, but finally opted for an administrative settlement of her problem by the High Commissioner.10 This time it was Tshekedi who objected, on the grounds that he was preserving Seretse's inheritance from Oratile's cupidity. There was clearly some sympathy for Oratile in colonial administrative circles, but Tshekedi would not be moved. Oratile abandoned the matter, vowed that she would never recognize Tshekedi as acting kgosi, and was exiled to Francistown for her pains. She did not return home for 17 years, until 1947 when the High Commissioner lifted Oratile's ban on Tshekedi's recommendation no doubt in anticipation of Seretse's imminent accession to power."

As the boy Seretse grew older and more independent-minded, he and his cousins were allowed to go outside the confines of the kgosing precinct. They were actively encouraged to mix with other children in nearby parts of the town. One of their favourite sports was to slither down the ancient rock slide on the lower parts of Thataganyane. The slide had been worn smooth by tens of thousands of years of joy-riders' bottoms. Thataganyane was a prominent rock standing 15 or 20 metres high next to the L.M.S. mission and the *red house’, which is today the Khama III Memorial Museum. (The large red-roofed house had been allocated by Khama to an employee, the trader George Smith, who continued to live there until it was bought back by Tshekedi. 12) Like other boys Seretse delighted in hunting small birds with a sling shot, and was good at it. His friends remember him behaving in a down-to-earth manner, big-hearted and friendly, often buying sweets for them. But Seretse looked frail, and his uncle continued to worry about his health. Tshekedi knew full well that
whispers of bewitchment, by him or his mother, still circulated about Sekgoma II's death. He was determined that there should be no cause for such insinuations to be repeated over the health of Sekgoma's son.

When the six-year-old Seretse developed a persistent cough through the winter of mid-1927, Tshekedi asked Dr Drew to make special arrangements for Seretse to be treated by specialists in Johannesburg, 800 kilometres away by train in South Africa, at the expense of the Bangwato treasury. Tshekedi also induced the B.P. administration to find suitable accommodation as near as possible to the whites-only centre of Johannesburg for the party of Bangwato who would accompany the prince. It was also arranged that the party should travel together in a second class railway compartment - in those days normally reserved exclusively for white people. The party consisted of two headmen (Tsogang ‘T.P.’ Sebina and Mathwane Mosinki), Seretse's cousin David Motalaote, his trusted nanny Karu, and an elderly woman to act as chaperone for Karu.

On the evening of September 14th, 1927, Seretse and his party boarded an express train at Palapye - arriving in Johannesburg late the next day. He was immediately admitted to Johannesburg Central Hospital. After careful examinations, including the novelty of X-rays, specialists revealed nothing abnormal beyond a touch of bronchitis and a supposed lack of physical development for his age. The skin test for tuberculosis proved negative.

An operation removing Seretse's tonsils and part of his adenoids, a standard medical procedure for white middle-class children in those days, was performed on September 22nd. Seretse stood the operation well and by September 27th had recovered sufficiently to be discharged. The doctors' verdict was that the child would be completely healthy in just a few months. Tshekedi was presented with a total bill for £42, which he gladly paid.

Seretse started school at the Khama Memorial School in the elementary class known as Sub-Standard A, at the beginning of 1929 - aged seven and rising eight during the year. Seretse's stay at the school was, however, considered purely temporary, until he was old enough to go abroad for what Tshekedi regarded as better education. The Khama Memorial School had originated as the kgotla school for royalty in 1904, with its own staff of Lovedale graduates independent from L.M.S. supervision. After a period as 'Serowe Public School', Tsogang Sebina replaced Simon Ratshosa as its principal. Re-named 'Khama Memorial School', it moved into new buildings near the race-course, on a small rise adjacent to which the Bangwato were building a town dam.

Seretse's school-mates tell us that Seretse did not take his education at Khama Memorial School too seriously. He often played truant together with Serogola Lekhutile, his cousin and close companion through these years. When they returned home, Semane invariably inspected their slates to ensure that they had been to school. But Seretse and Serogola would write sums on their slates, and then mark them in chalk as their teacher used to do. One day Semane discovered their trickery and gave them a good hiding.

In 1930, Seretse's mother, Tebogo, fell ill. Tshekedi took her to Mafikeng for treatment. There he left her under the care of Dr S.M. Molema, while he
proceeded to Cape Town on official business. Molema operated upon her to remove gallstones and an enlarged appendix; and she was recovering well when 'intestinal paralysis' set in. Tshekedi hurried back from Cape Town, but saw her only briefly before her death in December 1930. She was buried next to her husband and second son, in the royal cemetery on Serowe Hill.5

The impact of Tebogo's death on her surviving son, Seretse, can only be guessed at. At the age of nine Seretse became, strictly speaking, an orphan. The impact of his mother's death may have been tempered by the fact that the kindly Mma-Gaopotlake now assumed responsibility for bringing up Seretse and his little sister Naledi. Seretse also had the consolation of a large and rich family of relatives and retainers. But we may justifiably speculate on the inner misery and sense of isolation that a nine-year-old would have felt. Seretse was to exhibit a streak of inner loneliness in later life, even at moments when he was surrounded by crowds of friends and when he was himself contributing to the banter and jollity. Perhaps it was that loneliness that helped to drive him towards conviviality.

The successive deaths of Seretse's father, brother and mother also worried Tshekedi a great deal, because he and his mother could have been accused of the witchcraft that caused them. Tshekedi and Semane now took an even more active role in bringing up Seretse, sharing with Mma-Gaopotlake the responsibility for Seretse and little Naledi. The two children came to see Semane as another 'grandmother'.

Semane tried to instil Christian values in Seretse and his royal companions from an early age. She taught them hymns and scripture, and insisted on attendance of Sunday school classes and church services. It seems that she did not succeed in her efforts. Seretse's peers insist that at no time was Seretse ever wedded to religion or churchgoing. In later years, Seretse told his wife how much they hated the classes that Semane sent them to.6

One type of church-based activity, however, appealed to Seretse. He joined the Serowe branch of the Boys' (Life) Brigade, run by Rev Bums, the L.M.S. missionary. The Boys' Brigade was patronized by the Bangwato since it was similar to, but distinguished from, the government-sponsored Boy Scout movement, in which blacks were racially segregated as boy 'Pathfinders' and girl 'Wayfarers'. The boy Brigadiers often went camping at weekends, an outdoor activity which Seretse enjoyed immensely. They also raced and jumped in a rudimentary kind of junior athletics, which Seretse often won. Here were the beginnings of the later athlete and sportsman.7

Seretse also accompanied Tshekedi on trips into the veld, when the two grew together in spirit sitting round the camp fire under the stars. This love of the open air stayed with Seretse for the rest of his life, and helps to account for his love of camping and political campaigning in the remotest areas of the country. Tshekedi imparted to Seretse his knowledge of cattle, horses and the outdoors in general. Seretse learned about the tall red cattle of the Bangwato which often had magnificent horns - today removed in Botswana in
deference to the needs of the abattoir - and he learned to love 'the god with the wet nose' Tshekedi took Seretse and companions to farflung cattleposts by motor truck, and to nearer arable lands on horseback. They learned not only to ride, but also to till the land with teams of oxen. They played with boys who spent years, without the chance of going to school, as herders at the cattle posts. (Most of the commoners who mixed with high-born boys in local schools were girls.) Seretse became an excellent horse rider, though in later years he grew less keen on riding. He raced his uncle's horses in the competitions which were organized on the showgrounds at Serowe - the area of uncultivable black cotton soil beneath the new town dam. Such races were held there in honour of prestigious visitors such as the Resident Commissioner.

There was also a further attraction which drew Seretse to the cattle posts - meat, both beef and wild game. He was a great lover of fatty red meat like his father. His normal diet, like that of other people, consisted largely of stiff porridge made of sorghum or maize, eaten with a relish of black beans, pumpkin or traditional spinach and sometimes more exotic vegetables such as cabbage and tomato. Meat as a comparative rarity in the diet was valued all the more. The young Seretse loved beef, especially the shredded form known as seswaa. He would run from pot to pot snatching it from the women who cooked it on festive days in huge iron three-legged pots over wood fires next to the kgotla. No doubt the women indulged the young child-chief. He would stuff his pockets full of such booty and then share it with his friends.

Seretse became an impish prankster, and was to remain so - despite the efforts of his puritanical uncle to restrain his nephew's naughtiness. On one occasion Tshekedi caught Seretse hiding behind a bush, smoking a cigarette. The boy was severely reprimanded and reminded of his station in life to set an example to others. I8

What was Tshekedi's attitude towards Seretse? In 1930, an unnamed British official told Margery Perham - the young Oxford academic and collaborator with Lord Lugard who was visiting the Bangwato capital - that he believed Tshekedi and his friends would never allow Seretse to survive long enough to become kgosi. This of course was merely a rehash of popular underground opinion. Perham to her credit expressed scepticism, as Tshekedi had taken so much trouble to have the prince treated by expert doctors in South Africa.19 Tshekedi's own viewpoint is expressed more clearly in a praise-poem which captures his acceptance of Seretse as future lion or kgosi of the Bangwato:

Nna ga ke tau, moramagana
I myself am not the lion, lion coloured
Ke mmala wa nkwe
I have the colouring of a leopard

Ngwana wa Tau o sa ntse a ntshetse morago
The son of the lion is following me.20
An alternative view of Seretse's status was expressed by Colonel Rey, the 'live wire' who was put in charge of the Bechuanaland Protectorate as Resident
Commissioner in 1929-30. Rey met Seretse in June 1930 and thought him 'an ugly little devil'.

In March 1930 Tshekedi was interviewed in London by the Secretary of State for the Colonies and Dominions, Lord Passfield. Passfield was better known as the Fabian socialist Sidney Webb. He strongly advised Tshekedi to seek the advice of the High Commissioner on a good education for Seretse.

Tshekedi wanted Seretse to follow in the footsteps of his father and uncle by attending Lovedale Institution in the Cape Province of South Africa. Seretse should not have to endure the inferior 'appropriate' curriculum and 'industrial education' being foisted by white philanthropists on blacks in Africa and North America. 'As a native I do not appreciate the suggestion that there shall be differentiation in curricula used for native and European students'. What Seretse needed, Tshekedi insisted, was a broad academic education, to prepare him for the future tasks of governing. Here he cunningly quoted from the American bible of the philanthropists, the Phelps Stokes Commission's reports on education in East, West and South Africa, to make his point:

The experience of history, the wisdom of science and the inspiration of literature and art will be required by native leadership to guide and direct their people through the perplexing process of evolution from primitive stages of life to those of civilization now forced upon them by overwhelming forces both kind and unkind.

Tshekedi began the application procedure for Lovedale in August 1930, two months before he contacted the High Commissioner in compliance with Passfield's wishes. He wanted Seretse to start school early in 1931. The High Commissioner's office took a long time in replying. Resident Commissioner Charles Rey and his energetic education inspector H.J.E. Dumbrell were secretly arranging for Seretse to go to Domboshawa Government School in Southern Rhodesia, which was run on Phelps Stokes lines. Domboshawa was thought most suitable as it emphasized character training as well as manual skills for Africans. However, it only admitted pupils in Standard VI, and nine-year-old Seretse needed a school for Standard I. He had just completed Sub-Standards A and B at Serowe. Dumbrell therefore contacted Tegwane Wesleyan mission school in Southern Rhodesia, just over the B.P. border near Plumtree, to secure a vacancy for Seretse in Standard I, in preparation for transfer to Domboshawa.

Rey and Dumbrell vigorously opposed the suggestion of Lovedale. It would turn Seretse 'into a follower of Kadalie' - the African trade unionist who had caused so much trouble for white capitalists in the 1920s, by turning his Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (I.C.U.) into a mass movement. Seretse would meet Africans of 'a decidedly anti-European outlook in life' at Lovedale. Rey attributed Tshekedi's own 'stubbornness' to Lovedale education, claiming (incorrectly) that Tshekedi had participated in disturbances while a student there.

When Rey and Dumbrell finally contacted Tshekedi, the regent bluntly rejected all schools in Southern Rhodesia as inferior. He particularly disliked the thought of Domboshawa: it was a government school where pupils would not be allowed
any independence of mind but would be taught to be partisans of government. He went on to say that he knew Lovedale to be a good school because he had attended it himself. It admitted students regardless of creed, race or tribe and had produced many people of stature over the years since its founding in 1841. Of course by this time Seretse's application to Lovedale had been successful. Tshekedi asked the headmaster at Lovedale, whom he knew well from his own student days, to educate Seretse as a future ruler: 'We want him to fill the post with dignity, tact and foresight.' Seretse left Serowe for Lovedale on February 3rd, 1931, despite the continuing disapproval of the B.P. administration. Rey was furious and requested the High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Stanley, to take disciplinary action against Tshekedi. Stanley, however, though previously Governor of Southern Rhodesia, was a great admirer of Christian mission institutions such as Lovedale. He closed the whole affair over Rey's objections by telling the Dominions Office in London that Tshekedi's action was justified by the B.P. administration's delay in dealing with the matter. Charles Rey was left to console himself with the thought that Seretse 'has not such a fertile brain as Tshekedi and he will not imbibe at Lovedale so much as Tshekedi did.25 Tshekedi and the Bangwato treasury paid for the privilege of Seretse sitting at Table No.14 at Lovedale, where the diet was to European standards and the language of conversation was English. In addition to regular lessons, Seretse took private tuition at Lovedale in music, for which extra fees were paid, with Annie Geddes, the wife of the famous boarding master Major Geddes. Tshekedi, who was to be a patron of the South African Motswana landscape painter John Koenakee Mohl, considered that a future ruler of the Bangwato should be able to appreciate fine arts. Seretse did reasonably well in his piano playing but never developed a taste for classical music or for 'Western' painting.26

We have one of our periodical little troubles in Ngwato Reserve. A pretender to the throne has arisen, a new star on the horizon, who is unknown to everybody. He laid quiet at Shoshon [Shoshong] for seven years but has apparently recently been inspired by some influence or influences, at present unknown, to try and get into the limelight * . . He is about 27 years of age.27 In October 1931, when Seretse was nearing the end of his first year at Lovedale, the Resident Magistrate at Serowe was approached by Gasetshwarwe Kgaman, illegitimate son of Sekgoma Khama by Maria Kgaman. He was accompanied by his uncle Kesebonye Sephekolo, grandson of Tshukudu and headman of Ditharapa ward at Serowe. What they had to say alarmed Potts the Serowe resident magistrate. Gasetshwarwe was claiming the bogosi of the Bangwato for himself, precluding the rights of both Seretse and Tshekedi to be kgosi.28 Tshekedi told Potts that his own intelligence indicated that Kesebonye and Gasetshwarwe planned to secede from the Bangwato and form their own state somewhere near Bonwapitse, south of Mahalapye. Potts then summoned senior royal Bangwato to fill him in on the origins of Gasetshwarwe and the possible legitimacy of his claim to the throne. They were dismissive of the claim, as Gasetshwarwe was Sekgoma's son through concubinage; his mother had not been
married according to customary practice, nor had she been designated mohumagadi - the bearer of the heir. Sekgoma II had specifically refused to recognize Gasetshwarwe as his heir. Baboni Kham had taken Gasetshwarwe to Sekgoma I's death bed, pleading for his recognition as heir. Sekgoma had refused. Ellenberger the Resident Commissioner had also simply ignored Baboni's pleas on behalf of Gasetshwarwe.

Phethu Mphoeng was convinced that the conspiracy behind Gasetshwarwe was yet another ploy by the Tshukudu lineage of Kham's first wife, now that the Ratshosa brothers were exiled, against Tshekedi the son of Khama's last wife. Tshekedi also saw the conspiracy as an extension of his earlier troubles with the Ratshosas. He pleaded with Potts to deal with it firmly before it divided the whole morafe (tribe'). Tshekedi probably also feared that Colonel Rey would use it as another stick to beat him with, if Potts delayed by referring the matter to Mafikeng. Potts wrote to the pretender telling him that he had no claim whatsoever to bogosi, and advised him to drop his claim or face the consequences. Gasetshwarwe replied that his dispute was not really with Tshekedi, who as mere regent was "only my servant" but with Seretse: I say that there is no man who has ever been subject to the leadership of his younger brother Seretse ... I am the son of Sekgoma. I am chief... I will go to my death roaring as a lion as I am the son of a lion - the son of Sekgoma.

Gasetshwarwe and Kesebonye were arrested on a charge of sedition. They were sentenced in the magistrate's court in Palapye in February 1932, to seven and ten years' imprisonment respectively, with hard labour. Some of their followers got three months with hard labour: others, including 'the most insistent agitator' Dingalo Monageng, were let off scot-free. Gasetshwarwe and Kesebonye served their sentences in Gaborone jail. Old Kesebonye died in prison; Gasetshwarwe was released after four years and was banished to live in Molepolole for 20 years. Thereafter he stayed quietly in Shoshong, and died unnoticed by the world in 1984.

In retrospect, Gasetshwarwe appears a rather pathetic individual, handicapped by the taint of bastardy, rather than the tool of a great conspiracy. But the episode certainly rattled the colonial authorities, as it did Tshekedi who otherwise showed himself unflinching in the face of troubles. Tshekedi was reportedly 'extremely nervous' about renewed assassination attempts. Potts, for his part, prejudged the trial by saying that Gasetshwarwe should be 'put out of the way' until Seretse had assumed the bogosi.

The Gasetshwarwe affair of 1931-32 caused few ripples outside Bechuanaland. It was the so-called 'flogging incident' which was to bring Seretse's homeland and his uncle into the spotlight of international media attention a year later in 1933. Tshekedi had sentenced a young white man called Phinehas McIntosh to a 'flogging' in kgotla. Serowe born-and-bred, McIntosh was in effect a Mongwato, but colonial law classified him as a European over whom the kgotla had no jurisdiction. He was a young tearaway and there were numerous complaints about
his drinking and fighting. But Potts declined to act on these complaints in the magistrate's court. Hence Tshekedi acted in kgotla. Colonel Rey in Mafikeng and Admiral Evans in Cape Town, who was acting as High Commissioner during Herbert Stanley's overseas vacation, interpreted Tshekedi's action as a fundamental challenge to white colonial power. Evans sent the Royal Navy and the Marines up the railway from Cape Town, to suppress this fictitious 'native rising' in the Kalahari. Tshekedi was deposed from the regency. But he spoke up extremely articulately, for his rights and those of his people, and was reinstated in a matter of weeks by the colonial government - after press and parliamentary outcry in Britain.32 Twelve-year-old Seretse's uncle became a celebrity at Lovedale. For teachers, Tshekedi was a proud product of the school who had stood up against immorality. For students, Tshekedi was an African who had beaten the whites at their own game.

Tshekedi remained in the public eye because of his legal challenge to the Native Administration Proclamations drafted by Rey. Tshekedi was becoming something of an expert on colonial administrative theory, publishing his opinions in the Journal of the Royal African Society. He claimed that the proclamations were more inspired by the 'Hertzog Bills' in South Africa than by the 'Indirect Rule' principles which had originated with Lord Lugard in Nigeria and had been developed further in Tanganyika (Tanzania). The climax to the confrontation came in 1936, when Tshekedi Khama and Bathoen II sued the High Commissioner in the B.P. Special Court at Lobatse. Rey arranged to have the proceedings broadcast through loudspeakers, for the crowds gathered outside the courthouse near Lobatse station. Tshekedi and Bathoen lost the case but won the moral victory, as Rey's proclamations were abandoned.33 Seretse was still a slightly-built, sensitive child with an unbroken voice. He was liked well enough by his tutors and his peers at Lovedale, and he claimed to have been enjoying the school. But he did not make much of a positive impression on other people at this stage in his childhood. He was appreciably younger than his class mates, many of whom were almost grown men - though he was about the same age as a child would have been in Europe or North America at the same level of schooling.

Seretse seems to have been depressed rather than encouraged by the newfound fame of his uncle. He despaired of ever being able to emulate his uncle's achievements: unkind teachers or fellow pupils may have rubbed this point in with sarcastic comments. When High Commissioner Stanley visited Lovedale in 1934, he received good reports about Seretse's work and behaviour. But when he talked to Seretse about himself and his future, the prince is said to have become *miserable indeed* - fearing he did not have it in him to become kgosi.34 Another official visitor to Lovedale was Admiral Evans - the man who had sent his sailors and marines to depose Tshekedi. Evans had a rather different view of Lovedale to the benign and bumbling Stanley, whom Rey regarded as a religious maniac with 'as much backbone as a filleted jelly fish.' With a possibly significant use of colour words, Evans wrote of the senior students of Lovedale: 'Quite
candidly, I was not impressed by the missionary college when I saw that some of the black students, big hulking fellows, lay smoking pipes in their beds, on white—oh, such white! sheets."

In November 1934 13-year-old Seretse must have been greatly depressed by the death from cancer (carcinoma) of his last-surviving immediate relative, his grandmother Mma-Gaopotlake. He had been very close to her. Seretse's health began to decline dramatically when he returned to Lovedale after the summer (Christmas) vacation in January 1935. He had just entered the Standard V class - the penultimate year of the primary educational cycle. He complained of chest pains and began to cough persistently.

Tshekedi was alarmed, and arranged for Seretse to see a specialist in Cape Town. The specialist's diagnosis was that Seretse had tuberculosis of the lungs, which had not however reached an active stage. There was no special cure necessary except rest, good food and exercise. Seretse needed physical exercise more than the mental exertion of studies. The specialist concluded that the damp coastal climate of the Tyume valley at Lovedale was obviously not conducive to Seretse's health. A tubercular patient needed to move to a high, dry and sunny climate, with plenty of fresh air, away from crowded population centres. In other words Seretse must return home. The principal of Lovedale broke the news to the boy. On April 9th, 1935, Seretse and his (Mokalanga) age-mate Ntambo Leburu left by train for Bechuanaland. 36

For the time being Seretse was tutored at Serowe by Peter M. Sebina, the Tribal Secretary. Tshekedi then arranged for Seretse and a companion called Lekaka to go and live with the Clark family at Motshegaletau near Moiyabana, a small village 40 kilometres south-west of Serowe on the quiet desert road to Shoshong. Mrs Clark was the former Miss Young, an L.M.S. schoolteacher who had married a local white trader. Tshekedi himself had attended her small English-medium school at Moiyabana a generation earlier. A doctor's assurance was secured that Seretse's residence in Motshegaletau would cause no health problems to the Clark children. Mrs Clark then gave Seretse and Lekaka private lessons in topics considered unstrenuous, such as music.

Seretse was given plenty of food, rest and exercise; and was weighed regularly to monitor his progress. Mr Clark was given special permission to shoot game for the pot, to encourage Seretse's taste for red meat which was taken to be good for him. Tshekedi also asked Clark to take Seretse hunting, for practice in shooting and horse riding. There was no need for Clark to buy a hunting licence so long as he had the heir present, according to the regent: no doubt the District Commissioner (as resident magistrates had been renamed) would have disagreed, but there was no need for him to know.

After more than half a year at Motshegaletau, Seretse had made great progress in health, as well as in light studies. He returned to Serowe in December 1935, fully recovered. Tshekedi made sure that the Clarks were reimbursed for the up-keep of Seretse and Lekaka.17

Tshekedi had spent the intervening months negotiating a new school for Seretse. Significantly Tshekedi first looked north to tropical Africa rather than south to
settler lands. The first school considered was East Africa's most prestigious, King's College at Budo in Uganda. But the wet climate of Uganda might cause the recurrence of chest problems for Seretse, and

tshekedi was not impressed by the fact that the school admitted only the sons of chiefs. He wanted Seretse 'to mix with other boys' - presumably so that he could learn how to rule them.3

In December 1935, Tshekedi applied for a place for Seretse at Adams College, just south of Durban in Natal. Adams was close to the coast but was situated on breezy hills above Amanzintoti. It had a good academic reputation, having been founded in 1837 by missionaries of the American (Congregational) Zulu mission - spiritually close to the L.M.S. missionaries of the Bangwato. The principal of Adams College was Dr Edgar Brookes, a scholar who had made his name as the arch-proponent of 'liberal segregationism'. Tshekedi told Brookes that Seretse had completed the equivalent of Standard V under a private tutor, and now wanted to complete Standard VI, with the option of continuing into secondary classes at Adams. Seretse was provisionally admitted to Standard VI, and was permitted to offer Setswana instead of Zulu as an examination subject. Brookes assured Dumbrell, the concerned Bechuanaland inspector of education, that Seretse would receive sound training in civics, ethics and community service, in addition to the normal academic subjects. Seretse arrived at Adams College in early February 1936, at the age of fourteen and a half. The mission doctor examined him and found him fit. He did very well in his studies, coming first in mid-year examinations. His uncle was extremely pleased and urged Seretse to maintain his good record. He was also developing physically and his sporting talents began to show at Adams. Seretse took up boxing and soccer, getting his uncle to buy him suitable kit. In letters home he even took an interest in soccer back in Serowe, looking forward to playing the game during the holidays.39

Tshekedi arranged for Seretse to spend the winter holiday, from late June to early August, around Thaba Nchu on the highveld in the Orange Free State. He stayed at the home of Dr J.S. Moroka, an Edinburgh-educated doctor and rich farmer who also became the kgosi of the Seleka group of Barolong at Thaba Nchu. Moroka's sister Ester Ntsieng had recently married Bathoen II, kgosi of the Bangwaketse in the B.P., who was Tshekedi's closest political ally. Mrs Moroka proved to be extremely hospitable, anxious that Seretse should enjoy his holiday with them.

Seretse told Tshekedi that he had enjoyed his stay with the Morokas but still felt a bit lonely. His weight, he gleefully informed his uncle, had shot up from 138 to 150 pounds - a real 'heavy weight' as Seretse boasted. This was because he had eaten lots of meat at Thaba Nchu: 'I really love meat above all other foods. On his return from the Morokas he joined the Adams boxing team. Tshekedi was so happy with his nephew's overall progress that he offered to give him any horse he wished, recommending one named Dandy.40

Seretse remained generally healthy at Adams. On one occasion he sprained
his ankle in a football match, but the glory of playing in the school team as a substitute goal-keeper more than compensated for the pain. On another occasion, Seretse did have a recurrence of his old chest pains, and was rushed to hospital in nearby Durban for a week. The pains cleared up, but it was an omen that the climate was not after all good for Seretse. He also continued to feel lonely among so many people speaking a language, Zulu, which he barely understood.

By now Seretse was corresponding regularly with Tshekedi, and was to continue to do so for another twelve years. Tshekedi got the correspondence going in April, delighted that Seretse had written saying he had done well enough not to have to repeat Standard V. Tshekedi’s letters fussed about topics such as whether Seretse was bothered by maize (rather than sorghum or millet) porridge as the staple diet at school, and where Seretse wanted to spend the winter holiday. Tshekedi also sent pocket money to his nephew in the form of postal orders. They exchanged terms of endearment such as ‘Father’ and Ngwanaka (my son) or ‘Sonny’. Only occasionally did Tshekedi address Seretse in formal terms such as Morwa-kgosi (king’s son) or Phuti.

Once more Tshekedi had to put up with insinuations among Bangwato royals that he wanted to deprive Seretse of bogosi. Edirilwe Seretse, father of Seretse’s great friend Lenyeletse, complained that Tshekedi had not consulted the royal ‘uncles’ in making arrangements for the prince’s schooling. He was worried that the regent wanted to consolidate his position by keeping Seretse permanently away at school. Simon and Oratile Ratshosa, Tshekedi’s constant thorns in the flesh, got wind in their exile of Tshekedi’s plans to send Seretse away to Britain for studies. They interpreted this as an attempt by Tshekedi to kill off Seretse with his chest problems in the cold climate.41

Seretse himself wanted to do secondary classes at Tiger Kloof, the L.M.S. missionary institution on the railway south of Vryburg in the part of Cape Province formerly called British Bechuanaland. Tiger Kloof was full of Batswana, both girls and boys, as well as Amandebele from Southern Rhodesia. But Bangwato royals and top aristocrats continued to send their sons to Lovedale, and had boycotted Tiger Kloof ever since 1904 - though it was considered good enough for daughters and sons of commoners. The Khamas had never really forgiven the L.M.S. for choosing the site of Tiger Kloof, among white firms in the south, in preference to the buildings offered by the Bangwato at Old Palapye. Ironically, the L.M.S. had opted for what was thought to be greater security of land tenure on a freehold farm: to be proven wrong later in the century when Tiger Kloof was closed down and left to rot by the apartheid government of South Africa. The Khamas were not bought off either by the L.M.S. claiming that the clock tower on the Tiger Kloof dining hall was a memorial to Khama the Great.

Tshekedi fell in with his nephew’s wishes, apologizing to Dr Brookes for withdrawing Seretse and assuring him of complete satisfaction with Adams College. Brookes in turn expressed his disappointment, but entirely understood the reasons for withdrawing the boy. Seretse’s conduct, said Brookes, had been ‘exemplary”42
In December 1936 Rev Haile, the principal of Tiger Kloof, accepted Seretse's application to start junior secondary classes. At this point Colonel Rey once again stuck his nose in, castigating Haile for admitting Seretse without first consulting the B.P. administration. Rey, who was a professed atheist, was a pathological enemy of the L.M.S. and of Protestant missionaries in general - referring to them as 'a poisonous nest of vipers.' The particular butt of Rey's ire was Tshekedi's friend the Rev 'Fat Albert' Jennings. Jennings for his part regarded the enemy more philosophically: 'his day will soon be over here, and when he goes to England in April 1937, that will be the end of him. He will not be returning as the Resident Commissioner, so his malign influence has a definite period.'

On his way through Mafikeng to start at Tiger Kloof, Seretse was presented by Tshekedi to Rey: 'The lad has improved a good bit,' thought Rey, 'and seems pleasant enough and well grown.' He added prophetically: "There will be trouble when Seretse succeeds. Thank goodness I shan't be here.'"

On February 7th, 1937, Seretse enrolled at Tiger Kloof in the first of three classes working towards the Cape Province Junior Certificate. He now had the company of his closest friends from Bangwato country - Goareng Mosinyi, Serogola Lekhutile and Lenyeletse Seretse. Tshekedi had to be reassured by Haile that Seretse was not pursuing a commercial/industrial course, which terminated after three years, but the more academic programme which would enable Seretse to proceed to university matriculation.

Haile allayed Tshekedi's fears by informing him that Seretse was studying English, Chuana (i.e. Setswana), Biology, Hygiene, Physiology, Latin, Geography and History - all of which were subjects for the Cape Department of Education's Junior Certificate. Tshekedi in turn insisted that Seretse resume and stick with his now hated piano lessons. At the end of Form I in November 1937, Seretse obtained a first class pass, taking fourth position in his class group. He was rated as a pleasant student with 'excellent conduct.'

Two sets of events in 1937 may have helped Seretse to develop a more realistic view of Tshekedi than he had had as a young boy. First, Tshekedi's 1936 marriage was rapidly overtaken by divorce in 1937. Seretse had been his uncle's best man at the wedding: the wedding photographs show 15-year old Seretse as a now gangling youth, taller than Tshekedi. Seretse had got to know and like the young woman, Sethakwane Moloi, and had also become attached to the daughter born of the marriage. He must have been taken aback when Tshekedi renounced the child's paternity and began messy divorce proceedings in the colonial courts. Leetile Raditladi, in later years pioneer nationalist and trade unionist as well as the premier love poet in Setswana, was cited as the co-respondent. Tshekedi wrote to Seretse at Tiger Kloof, advising him not to 'emulate me' - as divorce was bad. Seretse may also have seen a more human and fallible side of Tshekedi in the latter's reaction to the death of his own mother, Semane, in late 1937. He told Seretse about Semane's death in a restrained letter: 'We are now beorphaned but that is God's will.' He urged his nephew not to let grief interfere with his studies,
as 'death is in everybody's path.' But Tshekedi’s other reaction, as in the case of Sethakwane, was to go around making wild accusations of poisoning by his enemies. He demanded a postmortem: one was conducted and Tshekedi was told that Semane had died of natural causes. 46

Tshekedi was a far more regular letter-writer than Seretse, keeping up a steady flow of family news. He was both the ‘parent’ and the employer of two or three typists keeping up his voluminous daily correspondence. Letters from Seretse were usually timed to include a plea for cash. One of the boarding masters at Tiger Kloof, James Mpotokwane, himself a Mongwato, was somewhat taken aback that Seretse received no regular allowance but had to plead for each instalment. He put this down to Tshekedi trying not to spoil his nephew, rather than to any malice. The truth may also be that Tshekedi burdened himself with too many administrative matters, of which this was but a minor one. Yet when Tshekedi sent the money through he always made sure that Seretse as Morwa-kgosi got a larger share than his chums Serogola and Lenyeletse, to emphasize Seretse’s seniority over them.

Seretse's occasional letters were not without characteristic humour. He complained in one letter that he was getting lean at school because they ate meat only twice a week - a not unusual frequency in Botswana schools before the 1970s. He added that he was looking forward to getting fat again in the vacation by hunting eland - the royal game which was juicier even than the best beef. In a letter addressed to Sethakwane as 'mother' on the eve of his return home, he added: 'Please see to it that meat is reserved too... I have lost much weight through lack of meat, butter and cream, and I want to make up for the lost weight when I get home.' He asked her to make sure that David Lekhutile, Serogola's younger brother, kept plenty of mpshwe (sweet reed) for him. He was certainly getting taller but could hardly have been getting thinner. In one of his letters Seretse informed his uncle that he needed a new suit, as the one bought in Johannesburg had become too small for him.47

During June 1938, when Seretse was in Form II and just about to turn 17, Seretse's health - for the last time for many years - gave cause for concern. He contracted pneumonia on a Monday, after playing football in Vryburg on the Saturday. Tshekedi's fears once again come through in his instructions to Haile: 'There should be no breath of suspicion concerning the treatment that Seretse has had. No one must be able to say that he has in any particular been neglected.' Seretse was immediately taken to the cottage hospital in Vryburg. A standby oxygen cylinder was brought in, and an extra nurse was fetched from Lobatse hospital in the B.P., so that Seretse could be attended around the clock. A specialist called Girdwood was brought in by aircraft from Johannesburg. Girdwood had just returned from advanced studies of pneumonia in New York and Boston. Telegrams poured into Principal Haile's office from such senior royals as Phethu Mphoeng, enquiring about every twist in Seretse's condition.4s All this drew attention to Seretse's privileged origins. A fellow student, Vivienne Mothibi, herself not a Mongwato but later to marry one, recalls:
You could never have guessed he was a prince. He was simple in dress and manner. We sat at the same desk at Tiger Kloof as students in B.C. Thema's Setswana class and he never ever hinted that he was a prince. It was not until he was taken seriously ill that I knew he was a prince, because Bangwato royalty converged on Tiger Kloof to attend to him.49

By August 1938, Seretse was back at Tiger Kloof and a medical examination confirmed that he was fitter than ever. Tshekedi sent a beautiful kaross in appreciation to nurse Emily Phoofo and a lion skin for Dr Manolis, as well as paying all bills. Tshekedi was developing close links of another kind with medical circles to the south at Mafikeng. During 1938 he married Ella Moshoela, a nurse and relative of the Molema brothers, Drs Modiri and Sebophiwa Molema, who had a joint practice in Mafikeng after 1939.

Despite his illness, Seretse passed his Form II in November 1938, coming third in a class of 13. But he did not do so well in Latin; and his tutor advised 'steady application' in this subject. His conduct was rated 'exceptionally good'.50 Seretse then had a good year in 1939, the third and last year of the Cape Junior Certificate course. He was appointed a prefect, presumably because of good conduct rather than royal birth, and became known for dealing with pupils firmly but fairly. As one of his contemporaries points out, Seretse was particularly good at handling naughty boys because he had himself learnt so well how to be naughty - a case of setting a thief to catch a thief.51

His keen interest in sports, evident since Adams College, flowered at Tiger Kloof. Seretse improved on his boxing and played for the college's first eleven soccer team. This took him with the team to nearby Vryburg and other places in the vicinity to compete against other 'non-European' soccer teams. (Racial segregation aside, whites in South Africa were addicted to rugby football rather than to soccer.) Seretse became very team conscious and periodically wrote to his uncle about their matches, such as when they beat both the 'native' (African) and Indian teams of Vryburg. Seretse and other Serowe boys at Tiger Kloof formed their own Maleleka-tlou ('elephant chasers') football team separate from the school team.

Seretse developed a keen interest in athletics, competing in such field events as high jump, sprint (100 and 220 yards), hurdles, discus and shot put. Seretse's name appears frequently in the Tiger Kloof Magazine as an athlete taking first or second place in college sports competitions. The weakling of previous years, whose health had caused Tshekedi so much concern, had developed into an athletic 18-year-old.52

The real test of Seretse as a prefect came on Sunday, March 19th, 1939, when the boys went on strike at Tiger Kloof, rampaging through the campus breaking window-panes and furniture. They also ransacked the house of Mr Walter Standard Pela, the boarding master in charge of boys. Pela fled to Vryburg where he took refuge until the strike had ended. The heart of their grievances was resentment over disciplinary measures instituted by Pela. Pela, a Mopedi from the northern Transvaal, had joined the school in July 1938, after several years
working for the South African Police a force with military origins and traditions of discipline and control. The problem was that Pela used methods more familiar in army prisons than in civilian ones in other countries.

Former students of Tiger Kloof vividly recall Pela's most hated form of punishment. A boy would have to run up and down a steep slope, in the burning heat of day, carrying a bag full of sand weighing up to 40 pounds. This was done in full view of other students, to humiliate the student concerned, with Pela shouting a continuous string of military-like orders to aid the process. Some students collapsed from the strain. This was why the boys struck in order to force the college to expel Pela. Seretse did not participate in the strike and attempted, in vain, to dissuade others from joining in. At the beginning of the strike he is said to have been the only prefect who could move freely among the strikers. Other prefects, too closely associated with Pela's ruthless regime, went into hiding for fear of reprisals. But as tempers began to flare, close friends of Seretse such as Goareng Mosinyi feared that he might get hurt by strikers. His friends hid him first in a huge empty boiler, and then in the house of a friendly teacher, Mr Makhunga.

Makhunga told Seretse that Pela blamed the strike on Bangwato boys like himself. This caused Seretse and other Bangwato to protest to Haile against Pela's allegation. Seretse wrote to Tshekedi asking permission to return to Serowe, and offering a somewhat idealistic but sophisticated argument for withdrawal from school: 'One learns because one concentrates on one's subjects. If one's mind is full of grief, one cannot internalize what he is taught.'

Tshekedi was unmoved by the plea for withdrawal, though impressed by Seretse's stand on what he considered to be an injustice. Uncle commended nephew and persuaded him not to throw over his education in protest. He was also anxious that Seretse should keep a low profile since the newspapers would seize on anything he did - to allege that Seretse, and thus by implication Tshekedi, had organized the strike. Tshekedi still had the reputation in South Africa of being a dangerous agitator against colonial rule. This reputation could too easily be transferred to Seretse. Fifteen boys were expelled from Tiger Kloof, and 13 others left the school in protest at the expulsions. Seretse and others swallowed their pride and got back to work. Pela lasted another two years. He was forced to resign after publicly disparaging the 'industrial' students as being inferior to those who followed 'academic' courses.

In December 1939, Seretse completed the Cape Junior Certificate course and bade farewell to Tiger Kloof - with a second class pass, coming second in the examination class of nine at Tiger Kloof. His class teacher's regret was Seretse's persistent weakness in Latin, which spoilt his chances for a better all-round grade. He was now eighteen and a half, and raring to go back to his beloved Lovedale for high school studies. Tshekedi was also proud of his nephew's achievements, and intimated to Haile that Seretse eventually wished to study Law. Haile wrote of Seretse in his final report at Tiger Kloof:
I am very pleased with his progress. We are sorry to lose him, but are glad to have had some share in his education. He has the makings of a strong and good man. If he reads wisely and chooses good companions it will be a great help to him."

Tiger Kloof in a sense was to stay with Seretse for the rest of his life. The 'Old Tigers' whom Seretse got to know at Tiger Kloof were the generation that came to political power with Seretse in the 1960s, when Botswana became an independent republic. Seretse's old Setswana teacher, B.C. Thema, was his first Minister of Education. Even W.S. Pela was to appear again in Seretse Khama's life - 15 years later, incongruously trying to play the role of Bangwato people's representative in London.

By the age of 18 Seretse had learned to be an individual, simultaneously standing back from and participating with the crowd. His privileged status and upbringing gave him a sense of uniqueness which seemed to compel him to fit in with others all the more energetically in sports and good humour. At the same time he had experienced real tragedies of the spirit with the deaths of nearly all his immediate relatives. Perhaps that is what led him to cling all the closer, first to the masterful uncle on whom he had become so dependent, and later to his wife.

Chapter 3
MANHOOD
1940-48

Tshekedi had asked Seretse in August 1939 to consider where he wanted to follow the two-year matriculation course through to university entrance. Much to Rev Haile's disappointment, Tshekedi did not think Tiger Kloofs newly-started matriculation course was firmly established enough to be of good quality. Uncle and nephew considered other alternatives together. They considered Adams College once again, and the Anglican establishment of St Peter's School, Rosettenville - the African boys' school in Johannesburg later associated with the name of Father Trevor Huddleston. But Seretse wanted to return to Lovedale, and Tshekedi agreed because of its superior academic reputation. Seretse also persuaded Tshekedi to finance his cousin and close friend Goareng Mosinyi to go with him from Tiger Kloof to Lovedale. This time Tshekedi wrote to the principal of Lovedale, Rev Wilkie, telling him that he did not want Seretse to have the privileges of high table. Seretse would live and eat like an ordinary student.' Seretse returned to Lovedale again, in his 19th year, at the beginning of 1940 - now a young man with dramatically improved physique and much greater confidence than when he had left Lovedale five years earlier. Lovedale was flattered to have Seretse back and thereby renew its link with Tshekedi. Tshekedi's image was in the process of transformation: from agitator to statesman. He had been won over from confrontational tactics to conditional collaboration with the British authorities by Charles Arden-Clarke, the new Resident Commissioner who had succeeded Rey. Their bonding as firm friends grew out of camping together in the bush. (Arden-Clarke was thus prepared for his later task
of winning over Kwame Nkrumah on the Gold Coast from the role of jailbird to that of prime minister.)

Tshekedi had fallen in with British Empire fervour for the war against Germany and Italy. He thus sought to prove the loyalty of his people and their distinctiveness from the whites of South Africa who were trying to take over the Bechuanaland Protectorate from the British. South Africa had only entered the war by the sleight of hand of Prime Minister Jan Smuts over his Cabinet. The threat now was a rebellion by pro-Nazi, white Afrikaners in South Africa. It was to check this threat of rebellion in South Africa that Tshekedi initially offered Bangwato troops for the Second World War. Given the racial sensitivities of the time, it is not surprising that the offer of black troops to quell white rebellion was declined by the British. But once again Tshekedi had combined seriousness of purpose with subtle mocking of the racial contradictions of colonialism. Tshekedi and other Batswana dikgosi offered troops specifically for the British Army, declining to allow them to join the South African Defence Force as non-combatant native auxiliaries. As a result, with a total complement exceeding 10 000 men, the B.P. sent to war, in North Africa, the greatest proportion of its adult male population of any Allied country in the Second World War. Most of the troops were Bangwato. The Bangwato, like other colonial peoples in the Caribbean and elsewhere, also paid for two Spitfire fighter aircraft bought for the Royal Air Force. (Tshekedi had made his contribution to the history of the Royal Navy a decade earlier.2)

Seretse Khama and Goareng Mosinyi enrolled for Form IV at Lovedale in January 1940. Most students at Lovedale were Xhosa-speakers from the eastern Cape Province 'border region' (Ciskei and Transkei etc.). But there was a considerable mixture of students speaking other languages from elsewhere in southern Africa. There were at least four other Bangwato students from the B.P. apart from Seretse and Goareng. Seretse resumed his music classes with Annie Geddes, who reported that he was now a keen student and enjoyed the subject.3 But he proved to be overconfident, resting on the laurels of achievement at Tiger Kloof. By June 1940, Seretse was back in Serowe in high dudgeon, asking Tshekedi to send him to some other school. He had been obliged to return to 'explain' problems he was facing with some of his teachers. One of them had recently expelled him from class. A letter from the Principal followed. The letter said that Seretse was showing 'a kind of carelessness and assumed indifference in much of his work and in his manner.' He was handing essays in late, coming to class without the right textbooks or notes; and had developed a habit of slouching and rudeness manifested by standing with hands in pockets at assemblies and morning prayers. The principal attributed these developments to some inner turmoil, or to "psychological changes that sometimes mark the transition from adolescence to adulthood." He thought it best for Seretse to abandon studies at Lovedale and to try elsewhere. Seretse's mid-year school report from Lovedale concluded that he had 'decided ability but lacked manners and discipline.' He had become a rebel, refusing to take criticism easily from those in authority.
Tshekedi gave him a good talking to, and then dragged the young man back to Lovedale in person where Tshekedi patched up matters with the Principal. We do not know what Tshekedi said, but it certainly took effect. Seretse proved to be a reformed character thereafter. He continued his studies through Form V without further problem. In 1941 Seretse was appointed Senior Prefect at Lovedale. He played a major role in pacifying a student strike that year. A fellow student recalls how Seretse successfully addressed stone-throwing students, telling them to stop destroying property.

The improvement in Seretse's attitudes to life and work may partly be attributed to the steadying influence of Prof. Z.K. Matthews and his wife Frieda. Matthews was deputy principal at Fort Hare across the Tyume valley from Lovedale. He was not only a long-standing friend of Tshekedi's but also a Mongwato by paternal ancestry. He was a seminal figure in African politics and intellectual life, linking not only the Bangwato with the Kimberley elite from which he originated, but also with the Lovedale/Fort Hare intelligentsia. He had married into the Bokwe family and into a network of old Scottish mission-educated Xhosa families including the Jabavus and the Sogas. No doubt the Matthews' home was at first intimidating, but as Seretse matured he could appreciate its qualities better and became a regular visitor.

The big event of 1941 at Lovedale was the centenary of the mission and the school in July. Tshekedi Khama as the star former student was invited as a major guest and speaker. His speech with 'the note of the trumpet in it' startled both white and black, setting up prejudices and then turning them on their heads:

We Africans owe much to the white man. If there had been no white missionaries, there would today be no mission schools, no colleges, and you would certainly not be sitting here ... One of the things I have learned is that the gratitude we owe to our white friends should always be an African virtue and never be allowed to become an African vice ... We thank the white man for all he has done for us ... Then we sit back and wait for him to do more for us. That is wrong.

The bishop [who spoke before him] has told you that Africans suffer certain disadvantages because of their colour. That is perfectly true. I notice you all applauded eagerly. Were you applauding because you wanted to do something about it yourselves, or because you were hoping that good men like the bishop would do it for you? ... Most Africans are ignorant; but how many work hard at educating themselves? ... They could build colleges for themselves, if each contributed a little ... there can be no pride and no progress, if Africans depend always on white men to do for them what they ought to be doing by their own efforts ... God helps those who help themselves.

The reaction of African students to Tshekedi's speech is likely to have been ambiguous. The Second World War had lit a libertarian fire among younger educated men, who were now joining the African National Congress which had been revived under the leadership of Tshekedi's friend Dr A.B. Xuma since 1940. By 1941, the hopes of a post-war democratic future had
been aroused to an extent not seen among the African intelligentsia in South Africa for 40 years. A month after Tshekedi spoke at Lovedale, on a battleship in the Atlantic, Prime Minister Churchill of Britain had conceded to President Roosevelt of the U.S.A. the importance of 'four freedoms' which offered the prospect of a new democratic world after the defeat of Nazism. The centre of such 'Africanist' student activity was Fort Hare. Seretse regularly visited Prof. Z.K. Matthews across the Tyume valley and undoubtedly knew a number of such student activists. Oliver Tambo, who graduated from Fort Hare in 1941, later recalled with affection knowing Seretse who had then been at Lovedale. But Seretse himself was not a political activist: his main extra-mural preoccupation was sport.

Seretse enjoyed rude good health, despite occasional murmurs of old chest complaints. His sporting prowess improved greatly on what he had achieved at Tiger Kloof. It was either at Lovedale or later at Fort Hare that Seretse, according to Denis Brutus, beat the existing South African high jump record - a feat which could not be officially recognized at that time because he was not white. Soccer, however, continued to be Seretse's favourite sport. He played in Lovedale's first team which toured other districts and regions of South Africa, and eventually became captain. Seretse's interest in soccer extended back home to Serowe, where he and fellow students formed the team they called 'Motherwell' in honour of the Scottish (Glasgow) team of that name. Seretse arranged matches for Motherwell in the school holidays by writing beforehand to Tshekedi, who would gladly accept such challenges with light-hearted responses such as: 'Do not fear us, we too shall prepare for your challenge'.

It was soccer in particular that won Seretse popularity. His nicknames refer to him being fast on his feet when he got possession of the ball names such as 'Small Hops', 'Machine Gun', 'Flexible Six Forty-Five' and 'C to C' (Cape to Cairo). The apparently contradictory name 'Two Ton' referred to the 200 pounds weight he had by now supposedly achieved.9 Seretse extended his sporting activities to cricket and rugby, which were played by black South Africans only in the eastern Cape, as well as tennis, boxing, wrestling and athletics.

By his own confession, Seretse was a somewhat casual student in terms of reading prescribed books and regular academic work. He was one of those students, infuriating to others less quick of mind, who had the ability to mug up a subject quickly on the night before the test or exam. Thus his mid-year report for Form V in June 1941 put him third in a class of 34. Such technique served him well at secondary level, but proved to be a serious handicap when he reached university level. His favourite reading was detective novels, beginning with Sherlock Holmes and moving into modern American pulp fiction, which he devoured avidly and incessantly for the rest of his life.

He also was a keen fan of cinema, especially cowboy and detective movies. He would go down to the nearby town of Alice to watch movies nearly every weekend, munching handfuls of peanuts while he watched. For those friends who missed the movie, he would recount the plots and mimic the actors at great length. One movie character that particularly took his fancy was Captain Starkey, a Robin
Hood figure who protected the weak from bullies. Starkey raised his fists and challenged the bully to 'Stand up and fight!'

Seretse's friends agree that Seretse took Starkey as his role model. They tell the story of a certain bully who often intimidated Seretse's diminutive best friend, Ralph Ontong. Both bully and victim were 'coloured' (i.e. mixed race). Seretse challenged the bully to a fight and beat him. There was another bully, one Matlou from Johannesburg, who used to try and injure members of the opposing football team when his team was facing defeat. When he rough-tackled Seretse in one match, knocking him over, Seretse got up and challenged him to a fight. Matlou was knocked flat by Seretse's fist. Thus it was that Seretse got the nickname 'Starkey' which was to stick with him among his friends for the rest of his life. 10

Seretse had his own nicknames for his closest friends, expecting them to call him by a nickname. Among the Bangwato, Mackenzie Lesetedi was dubbed 'Latido'; Dabutha Sedie was 'Dab-Dab'; and Lenyeletse Seretse was 'Snazzle' or 'Nkoseolo' - both being references to his big nose. "

There are many stories about Seretse's persistent schoolboy humour, his harmless but annoying pranks, and his rebellious flouting of conventional manners. When he had gobbled all his meat, he turned to a neighbour at table and diverted his attention with a cry of 'Look at that!', all the while snatching pieces of meat from the neighbour's plate, gulping them down and laughing heartily. On another occasion he belched loudly as he came into a study room where everyone was reading quietly, sitting down at his desk so quickly and quietly that no one could see who had made the noise when they looked up.

Seretse once infuriated a doctor examining his chest with a stethoscope. In those days, for reasons obscure, doctors ordered their patients to say '99' periodically in order to hear the resonance of different parts of the chest. But when the doctor asked Seretse to 'continue' after saying '99' once, Seretse went on to say '100', '101', etc. When Seretse later told this to his friends he wriggled with laughter. Another way of infuriating authority, which he repeated more than once, was to soak his gym shorts in water and then to ring them hard so that they became wrinkled when dry. He then wore the wrinkled shorts in an exercise class when everybody was expected to look spick and span. The drill master ordered him out to go and dress properly.12

Despite his humour, Seretse had a sense of honour. When Prof. Z.K. Matthews threatened to report Seretse to Tshekedi for some transgression,

Seretse retorted: 'Tell him everything so long as it is the truth.' His friends vouch for Seretse being given neither to lying nor backbiting, and being intolerant of such deviousness in others. He would be brutally honest in revealing anything untoward that one person said about another behind their back. There were some Xhosa royals at Lovedale whom Seretse despised for being puffed up, as they insisted on others addressing them as 'chief Seretse himself objected to being addressed in that way. The story is told of an incident during the total eclipse of the sun on October 1st, 1940, when students stampeded to higher ground to get a better view. Seretse inadvertently trod on the foot of another student who complained, 'You act just like a chief.' Seretse slapped the
unfortunate student across the face in fury, saying, 'At school there are no chiefs. We are all equal.'

Seretse would joke to his friends: 'Can you imagine me listening to all the complaints all day at kgotla, instead of doing more useful things?' This made some people conclude that Seretse was ambiguous about becoming kgosi. Certainly he did not intend to be a conventional one. It was not sufficient for a kgosi just to be economically progressive, building roads and schools. There had to be political changes too. Seretse came to regard traditional bogosi as unacceptable rule by one man - he began referring to chiefs as 'dictators'.

Such growing political consciousness was also expressed in Seretse's resentment of racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa. Seretse and fellow Batswana from the B.P. felt it all the more strongly as they lived in relative freedom from white racism and interference back home. It was the questioning of racial discrimination which led Seretse, according to his cousin Goareng Mosinyi, to question colonialism as a whole. Seretse used to assert that there was no reason why Europeans should continue to rule Africans. Africans were perfectly capable of ruling themselves using acceptable modern forms of statecraft.

Seretse took a stand on racism among students. Lovedale included both coloureds and Indians as well as a majority of Africans. (It had virtually no European students by the 1940s). Seretse's best friend, Ralph Ontong, was a coloured of Malay origin from the Western Cape. The joke was that the two together were like an elephant and an ant - Seretse being huge and Ralph tiny. Xhosa boys threatened to assault Ralph for being so obviously in love with a Xhosa girl. Seretse stood up in the students' dining hall and challenged anyone to a boxing match who dared to touch Ralph. Nothing happened to Ralph and the romance continued.

On another occasion they were discussing an article in a Durban newspaper, which claimed that Indian men were making love to African girls while preventing Indian girls from falling in love with African men. Some African male students were infuriated by this, attacking all relationships across the 'colour line'. Seretse took an unpopular individual position by saying that he did not care who, for example, his sister Naledi married. All that mattered was whether the couple were genuinely in love. A student by the name of Zansi took strong exception to Seretse's views and began to insult him. At first Seretse kept on talking as if he could not hear Zansi's insults. Then in a sudden burst Zansi was flattened by Seretse's fist. A riot almost broke out between Africans and Indians, with Seretse on the Indian side.

Many of Seretse's friends were of different and overlapping 'tribal' and 'racial' groups. But this did not stop Seretse teasing them about cultural differences. When Xhosa-speaking people appeared arrogant he would take them down a peg or two by wickedly referring to them as 'kaffirs'. (The word was by then an insult equivalent to 'nigger', but well-meaning scholars in the previous century had promoted it as an easily pronounceable alternative to the word 'Xhosa'.) Seretse used to tease a boy called Rantshabo, another Motswana, about his Zulu girlfriend - wondering aloud how she would fit in back home. 'Will she be able to fetch
water from the river and stamp corn as Batswana women do?' Rantshabo replied that Seretse was jealous - 'grapes are sour' - and so it ended there. On one thing all of Seretse's school friends are agreed: that he did not have, and never appeared to express interest in, a girl friend while at Lovedale - even though he was 20 years old when he left. '7 Seretse began to transfer his new attitudes and insights back home from Lovedale to Serowe. On one occasion Seretse used his status to confront white racism in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. There was racial discrimination in trading stores, public buildings such as post offices, and on the railway line which was owned by Rhodesia Railways and operated by South African Railways. The incident in question took place at Palapye Road railway station.

Seretse and other Serowe students going to Lovedale had been dropped off by a lorry from Serowe. As they waited around for the train to come, the white stationmaster took exception to the fact that Seretse and his fellow students casually strolled along the platform past his office and the whitesonly waiting room next door. No doubt Seretse had his hands deep in his pockets. The station master swore at the young men in Afrikaans, ordering them to keep away from the waiting room for white people. Seretse was not proficient in Afrikaans and asked a comrade, Mackenzie Lesetedi, to translate: Seretse then responded by telling his people to carry on strolling. The enraged station master exploded in fury, and Seretse shot back: 'This is our land and we walk where we please'. The station master called over a policeman employed by the railway company to deal with the 'cheeky natives'. The policeman also only spoke Afrikaans. Seretse told him: 'Speak in English; we do not understand Afrikaans here.' At this the policeman saw purple and advanced on Seretse threateningly. Seretse told him: 'Remove your uniform and follow me so that I may teach you a lesson.' By this time a large crowd of Bangwato had gathered to watch their Morwa-Kgosi confront the 'Maburu'. Peter Sebina, Tshekedi's secretary who had driven the Lovedale boys to Palapye, saw the disturbance and hurried over to intervene. Tshekedi was informed by telephone and tore down from Serowe to settle the matter on the spot. Apologies were tendered by the station master to Seretse; and the racist policeman was transferred forthwith. 18 Seretse also took his opposition to 'tribalism' back to Serowe. When he arrived back home for the 1940-41 summer vacation he found there was friction between Ikalanga-speaking and Setswana-speaking youths over as ever - football and girlfriends. (Such tensions, long evident at Tiger Kloof, were reinforced at Serowe by the east-west separation of 'Kalanga' and 'Tswana' wards at Serowe.) Seretse convened a youth meeting at Serowe where the situation was thrashed out at great length. Seretse argued that courtship across ethnic lines should be perfectly acceptable, since the Bangwato were one people regardless of their origins. He then used his status to oversee the signing of an accord known as the 'Slagpan Charter' - the title modishly echoing the Atlantic Charter between Roosevelt and Churchill - to help ease ethnic tension in the youth politics of Serowe.
There can be little doubt that Seretse shared the frustration of the ruling 'Phuti' establishment at the growing challenge posed by educated Bakalanga among the Bangwato. During his absence at Lovedale, Seretse's Motherwell football team was effectively taken over by Bakalanga youths. Seretse therefore founded a new ethnically mixed team which he pointedly named 'Miscellaneous.'

At the age of 20 Seretse Khama sat and passed his matriculation (university entrance) examination at the end of 1941. He had now reached the stage of education which Tshekedi himself had been obliged to abandon in 1925, when he was ready to pursue degree studies. Attentive to detail as ever, Tshekedi spared no effort in making arrangements for his nephew's further education. Uncle and nephew agreed that legal studies would best prepare Seretse to rule his people wisely in rapidly changing times. They knew that the B.P. administration did not approve. A joke then current among colonial administrators has been relayed down the years by Prof. Isaac Schapera, the anthropologist who made his reputation as author of the Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom. It was said that Tshekedi wanted Seretse to qualify as an attorney in order to save on the massive legal fees he was paying annually to his Cape Town attorney Douglas Buchanan. Buchanan, it was said, had given Tshekedi a Holy Bible with the words 'Count not the cost' inscribed by him on the flyleaf.

The indefatigable regent sought the assistance of Buchanan and other friends in the legal and academic professions to advise him on Seretse's legal education, and help secure him a place at a suitable institution. The original intention had been for Seretse to follow the pattern laid down by Khama for Tshekedi, to go to Britain to further his education. But the hazardous situation created by the Second World War clearly precluded this. Seretse suggested he should go to the University of Cape Town instead, as it was a healthy place with a good university. But Prof. Z.K. Matthews advised strongly against U.C.T. - because he thought that Seretse might be adversely affected by racial ostracism there as a black among so many whites. Matthews strongly favoured Seretse going to the South African Native (University) College at Fort Hare, where he was himself deputy principal.

Seretse wanted to do a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) degree. But he did not have good enough grades in Latin - the subject that Seretse had found difficult to master in secondary school, and which was to dog the rest of his academic career. Seretse dreaded the prospect of having to upgrade his Latin so much that he opted for a general B.A. degree including courses in Law and Administration. With the assistance of Prof. Matthews and Dr Alexander Kerr, the new principal of Fort Hare whom Tshekedi also knew personally, Seretse was admitted without difficulty to Fort Hare at the beginning of 1942.

Z.K. Matthews was now regarded by Tshekedi as Seretse's guardian during his Fort Hare years. Seretse took up residence in Beda Hall, the Anglican students' hostel at Fort Hare where the warden was Bishop Ferguson-Davie. Tshekedi, who had transferred from Lovedale to Fort Hare in the days when the latter offered matriculation classes, is said to have been recalled affectionately at
Fort Hare as 'one of the best, if not the very best, of all those who have been through this college, a great exponent of Greek Testament and Latin as well.' If so, Seretse's inadequacies as a classical scholar must have been something of a disappointment. Instead he settled down to B.A. studies in Native Law, Native Administration, Roman-Dutch Law, History, English and Setswana. There was no Constitutional Law on offer at Fort Hare, which Tshekedi had advised Seretse to study.

Such was Seretse's enthusiasm in starting university studies that he was soon hinting to friends that he wished to do a Master's degree after his Bachelor's. However, the ambition was premature, as he performed badly in his first mid-year examination at Fort Hare, failing in Native Law and not doing well at all in English - two subjects in which he might be thought to have had a natural advantage. His old secondary school practice of swotting at the last moment, rather than steady application, had proved disastrous.

Apologizing to his uncle, he vowed, 'I must pass in November.' On September 21st, 1942, a terse telegraphic message from Seretse landed on his uncle's desk at Serowe: 'Arriving Tuesday night.' The message crossed another telegram sent by Tshekedi on the same date: 'I wish to advise you in your interest to please dissociate yourself from these petty strikes ...'

The students at Seretse's hostel, Beda Hall, had launched a boycott campaign against their warden, Bishop Ferguson-Davie. The students were protesting against the bishop's ban on Sunday sports. They had attended prayers but had refused to sing, remaining silently on their knees throughout the service. They had also refused to participate in inter-hostel sports competitions. The bishop attempted in vain to get the students to recant by signing a declaration of loyalty. The students also spurned Prof. Matthews's offer to mediate.

The explanation offered by the authorities was that the students were motivated by African nationalist sentiment. Students talked ominously of punishing 'traitors', 'cowards' and 'those who sell the nation. The disciplinary committee of the Senate suspended the protesting students at Beda Hall, and made their readmission dependent on signing a declaration pledging to abide by all college rules. Seretse refused to sign the pledge and returned to Serowe. One can see a hint here of principled opposition to religious taboos on Seretse's part. But no doubt the real issue, besides resentment at the old bishop's paternalism, was exactly what the students said it was - the right to play sports in their spare time. Such an issue could have had no stronger supporter than Seretse the sportsman.

This was the third school or college 'strike' in which Seretse had been involved. Tshekedi realized that he would need stronger ammunition this time. He therefore brought in his ally Kgosi Bathoen II of the Bangwaketse, as an extra uncle to stiffen up the chorus of royal 'uncles' which Seretse would have to face. Bathoen was an uncle by virtue of his mother who had been a member of the Ratshosa family.

When Seretse arrived home, the uncles assembled for consultations while Seretse was sent off with Tshekedi's wife, Ella, to stay at a cattle post. The uncles were to be the 'hard' interrogators, while Ella was the 'soft' one to whom Seretse might
confess and recant. On his return from the cattle post, Seretse was called before his uncles. They all berated him and admonished him to turn over a new leaf in the interests of himself and of his people. Bathoen in particular appears to have cut Seretse to the quick with his sarcasm. He accused Seretse of being a coward for not having stood up against the mob: this was to rankle with Seretse for years to come. But Seretse ‘realised his folly’ and signed the Fort Hare pledge. He was readmitted without difficulty, and was never again in trouble at Fort Hare. Principal Kerr now took a close personal interest in Seretse's academic programme. He advised him to concentrate on doing well in a few subjects - rather than doing poorly in all, which would mean repeating the whole First Year. Seretse buckled down to work - but he was so unprepared for the November 1942 exams that he did not sit History and had to re-take English. He passed the other subjects well enough and was allowed to proceed to Second Year. Detective and cowboy novels remained Seretse's favourite reading, but he now appreciated the need for serious study to become a practising lawyer. Thereafter he did rather well, with Z.K. Matthews as his tutor in law and administration, and with the enormous advantage of practical experience in 'native administration' with Tshekedi in the vacations, to match theory with practice. When Matthews gave him a reading list for his Second Year, Seretse wrote to his uncle to borrow the books from his library or to be given the money to purchase them elsewhere. Tshekedi already possessed Howard Rogers's Native Administration in the Union of South Africa (Johannesburg, 1933), Ifor Evans's Native Policy in South Africa (Cambridge, 1934), Edgar Brookes's The Colour Problems of South Africa (Lovedale, 1933), Lowie's Primitive Society, and Schapera's Western Civilisation and the Natives of South Africa (London, 1934). There were only three books which Tshekedi did not have in his library: R.F.A. Hoernle's South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit, Raymond Firth's Human Types and Goldenweiner's Anthropology. Tshekedi was once again pleased with Seretse, writing him letters addressed to 'Sonny' while Seretse replied by calling him 'Father”. Letters between them were getting briefer but much friendlier as between virtual equals. As in this letter of April 19th, 1943, which also enclosed £3 10s:

My dear Sonny,
Hearty congratulations. Put more work into it and be successful at the end of the year.
Sending you under separate cover three tins Nugget polish & two tins tooth polish - no paste available.
Your uncle,
Tshekedi regretted that he himself had not had the chance to get a university degree. He told Seretse that he would be only the second Mongwato to earn one - referring to the B.A. which had recently been obtained by Monametse Chiepe, a young Ikalanga-speaking Mongwato whose sister Gaositwe had been a fellow student of Seretse's at Tiger Kloof. This was a convenient lapse of memory on
Tshekedi's part. Besides Z.K. Matthews, who was an expatriate Mongwato born abroad, there was at least one other Mongwato

with a university degree. K.T. Motsete had no less than three degrees from the University of London. But he had quarrelled with Tshekedi and had gone into exile, to South Africa and Nyasaland.2s

As a student working hard to get his degree, Seretse appears to have taken little or no part in the extraordinary development of political activity in South Africa in 1943-44. No doubt he had also absorbed the viewpoints of Kham III and of Tshekedi, who both deliberately distanced themselves and their country from involvement in the political affairs of the Union of South Africa. Tshekedi had, however, advised Seretse to take part 'in college debating societies', as such experience *will be of invaluable help to you when your school days are over.' Prof. Z.K. Matthews had been elected to the South African government's new Native Advisory Council in 1942. (Meanwhile its equivalent in the B.P., on which Tshekedi and other Bangwato representatives sat, had been renamed 'African Advisory Council'.) The N.A.C. was a gesture of cooperative spirit by the Pretoria government towards the African middle class as well as to traditional chiefs. But it was too little and too late, and was soon to be denounced by its own members as a 'toy telephone' with no one in government listening. Matthews became involved with the African National Congress, which was undergoing transformation into a political party. It adopted a new constitution in 1943, finally eliminating the special role of chiefs, and a political manifesto aimed at mass party membership. Others at Lovedale and Fort Hare leaned towards the All-African Convention, which was more left-wing than the A.N.C. It was led by D.D.T. Jabavu, Professor of Classics at Fort Hare and another friend of Tshekedi's, and was itself being transformed into what became known as the (Non-European) Unity Movement. Seretse did not involve himself actively in South African politics, but was more drawn to Jabavu's cosmopolitan movement - because of his range of coloured and Indian friends - than the then exclusively Africanist A.N.C. He saw Jabavu as being more in the tradition of the trade unionist Clements Kadalie, of whom he had long been an admirer.29 But there is no evidence that Seretse ever shared the Trotskyist leanings of the Unity Movement. Seretse was also a practical Pan-Africanist. He demonstrated this by his friendship with East Africans who had come to Fort Hare during the War. One of them, Charles Njonjo of Kenya, with whom he was photographed in a book published in 1947, was to become one of Seretse's closest lifelong friends.30

Other students with Seretse in the graduating class of 1944 at Fort Hare included G.M. Pitje and Ntshu Mokhehle. Pitje was the first chairman of the Fort Hare branch of the A.N.C. Youth League. The league was founded in Johannesburg in 1944, but Fort Hare was its most active branch. Mokhehle was later to found the Basutoland Congress Party but at this time was an active member of the A.N.C. Youth League. Students from Basutoland and Swaziland, unlike those from the Bechuanaland Protectorate, usually regarded their country as part of 'South Africa' even if not part of the Union.
Students in junior years to Seretse at Fort Hare included Robert Sobukwe, L. Mqotsi, Gaoitwe Chiepe and Ambrose Zwane. Sobukwe was later to found the Pan-Africanist Congress (P.A.C.) of Azania (South Africa); and Mqotsi became an active leader of the youth wing of the Unity Movement.31 Gaositwe Chiepe, the sister of Monametse Chiepe, was to have the most distinguished career of all the Batswana students at Fort Hare with Seretse - as Botswana's foreign minister in the 1980s and 1990s. Zwane from Swaziland, like Mokhehle from Basutoland, was active in the South African A.N.C. at first. Later he founded the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress in opposition to the paramount chief of Swaziland, Sobhuza II - who himself periodically paid individual membership fees to the A.N.C.

Tshekedi Khama was having a 'good war' as a trusted ally of the British. He was displaying, as he thought, such loyalty to the Crown that Britain could not possibly betray the trust of the Batswana, by handing over the B.P. to the Union after the war. Under his direction the adult male labour force of the Bangwato Reserve was recruited to serve in the African Pioneer Corps of the British Army - completely independent, on the insistence of Tshekedi, from the Union's Defence Force. Bangwato and other Batswana troops built fortifications and roads in Egypt, Libya and the Lebanon, and worked as dockers unloading ships. Increasingly they became front-line bridge builders, smokescreen crews and anti-aircraft gunners as they accompanied the British 8th Army through Italy as far as Yugoslavia. Together with troops from Basutoland and Swaziland they became regular armed soldiers, rather than simply unarmed sappers like black troops in the South African Defence Force.32

Back home, Tshekedi pushed his people hard and rode roughshod over objections to army recruitment - as he did too over objections to forced cultivation by women peasants of crops 'to support the war effort'. Tshekedi used military recruitment and regimentation to remove rivals and to exert social control over dissident groups. The traditional age-grades were, as in the 19th century, used as military regiments pledging loyalty to the kgosi. When Tshekedi fell out with his younger deputy, Serogola Kgamane, in 1942, he sent him and his mophato (age-grade) off to North Africa.33 Tshekedi had not ordered a new age-grade to be formed since 1931. Perhaps he was delaying this so that Seretse, the inevitable leader of the next agegrade, would not be obliged to go off to war. But this delay in recruiting

the next age-grade led to discontent and resistance to recruitment by members of the 1931 age-grade, led by Keaboka Kgamane. They were duly sent off to war. The resentment of the two mephato under Serogola and Keaboka was to prove fatal to Tshekedi, in that they helped to precipitate his downfall at the end of the 1940s.

Opponents of Tshekedi's rule tried to turn Seretse against him, by alleging that Tshekedi had plans to keep out Seretse and rule perpetually. During one of his 1943 vacations, one Dingalo Nthebolang urged Seretse to abandon Fort Hare and return to take up his role as kgosi. Seretse told Tshekedi of this; and Dingalo
Nthebolang was subsequently convicted and jailed for sedition by a colonial court. This did not deter some of the royal uncles pressing for the exact date of Seretse’s installation, and starting to plan the construction of an appropriately large house for him. The regent responded by convening a meeting of royal uncles in April 1944 to discuss Seretse’s future after graduation from Fort Hare at the end of the year. Tshekedi then wrote to Seretse telling him that it was his people's wish that he should assume bogosi after completing his B.A. Seretse would understudy Tshekedi in administration during 1945, and would then take full responsibility as kgosi in 1946 - at which point Tshekedi would gracefully retire.34 Seretse had by this time settled any doubts that he had previously had in high school about becoming kgosi. He told his peers at Fort Hare that he wanted to know all their thoughts, and for them to know all his, so that he could be a leader who knew what people wanted. The key word stressed by Seretse then and thereafter was therisanyo or 'consultation'.” But he still wished to delay taking up bogosi.

Seretse replied to his uncles on April 26th, 1944, pleading for time and opportunity to complete his legal education overseas. As it was not yet possible to go England because of the war, Prof. Matthews had advised him to tour other colonies in Africa, such as Nigeria, for six months to observe the changes that were occurring in colonial administration. There were two other alternatives. He could enrol for a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B) degree at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, as an interim measure before going to England. (Once he had his B.A. degree from Fort Hare, 'Wits' would exempt him from the onerous prerequisite of Latin.) Or, if the Bangwato insisted, he was prepared to come back right away and assume bogosi. However in that case he would need to be apprenticed to Tshekedi for two to three years, rather than just for one year. Faced with a two to three years' delay by whatever route, the royal uncles reluctantly agreed that Seretse should continue with his education after completing at Fort Hare in November 1944. Meanwhile the regent arranged for Seretse's traditional 'graduation' and coming of age in other ways acceptable to the Bangwato. At last a new age-regiment was formed, to be named Malekantwa and headed by Seretse - though in practice it was to be headed by his cousin Lenyeletse. Tshekedi gave Lenyeletse recognition as a new leader among the Bangwato, by taking him along as one of the Bangwato delegates to the annual meeting of the African Advisory Council, which met in Mafikeng, the administrative capital of the B. P., despite being miles outside it.36 Tshekedi also made arrangements for Seretse to take a wife. He chose Gaolese Molefinyane. She was the daughter of a faithful headman named Morotsi Molefinyane, who had been the regent's chief tax collector since 1934. Gaolese was an educated young woman: she had been at Tiger Kloof up to Junior Certificate. There was only one other Mongwato woman better educated - Gaositwe Chiepe at Fort Hare. Seretse proved to be unenthusiastic about the arranged match. We do not know why. People might have pointed out that the tax collector's daughter was hardly a
suitable 'great wife' to give him an heir: the marriage might simply be another way by which Tshekedi could keep a tight grip on Seretse if he was ever allowed to succeed as kgosi. Seretse might even have recalled that the chief tax collector before Gaolese's father had been his mother's consort Gaofetoge Mathiba, still living and apparently resented by Seretse. It is possible that the match with Gaolese may have been consummated during a vacation at Serowe. But it is surely extreme to claim, as Prof. Isaac Schapera does, that Gaolese Molefmyane was Seretse Khama's 'first wife'.37

A traditionally more appropriate wife for Seretse would have been drawn from one of his mother's relatives, or from a related royal family elsewhere. Seretse would have been aware that both Tshekedi and Bathoen II had married into royal or royal-connected families of Batswana intelligentsia in South Africa. But Seretse did not push for any such alternative match. His friends portray him as shy and apparently still uninterested in women even at the age of 23. Most likely the truth is that Seretse was harbouring romantic ambitions, perhaps fed by the movies he watched and the novels he read, to find a woman of his own choice. Romantic love was by no means purely a Western concept: the legend of Lentswe la Baratani ('Lovers' Rock') south of Lobatse, Sol Plaatje's novel Mhudi and the love poetry of Seretse's exiled uncle L.D. Raditladi all attest to this.

Having attained his B.A. from Fort Hare at the end of 1944, Seretse registered for an LLB at the University of the Witwatersrand in January 1945.38 Johannesburg was then as now the largest city in southern Africa, dominated by its gold mines, with bare dusty mountains of mine spoil which made the thin highveld air acrid on the tongue. The city was expanding rapidly in size, with new industries manufacturing war material and consumer goods previously imported from Europe. There was a demand for better educated African workers, who flocked with their families into the city environs.

In Johannesburg, Seretse was befriended by Joshua Nkomo, later the Zimbabwean nationalist leader. Nkomo had also arrived in January 1945, and stayed in the same student hostel as Seretse. He had been at Adams College in Natal and was starting a three-year course at the Hofmeyer School of Social Work. (Possibly on his recommendation, Seretse's cousin Lenyeletse was to follow him there three years later.) One of the places that both Nkomo and Seretse used to frequent was the Blue Lagoon Restaurant, where they mixed with other Fort Hare graduates and activists of the A.N.C. Youth League - people such as the young lawyers Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela. Mandela had graduated from Fort Hare in 1940, and had been a law student at Wits University.

There was one respect in which Seretse became more mature in these months in Johannesburg, if a later albeit hostile comment by a 'race relations' expert is to be believed. Romance bloomed at last. It seems that Seretse had an affair with a coloured girl, i.e. a woman classified in South Africa as being of mixed racial origins.39
There were few other African students at Wits besides Seretse. He was ill at ease with the bulk of white students, many of whom were neutral Afrikaans-speakers while pro-British English-speakers were off fighting in the war, though he seems to have made friends with at least one white male Jewish student. Seretse found the classes he took useful, but he was required to take tuition in that most hated of all subjects supposedly necessary for a lawyer - Latin. Seretse did not, however, stay the year at Wits. The end of the war in Europe in May 1945 made possible his departure for education in England.

The idea of Seretse going to Oxford University seems to have been planted in Tshekedi's mind by Christopher Cox, the Colonial Office's well-known adviser on education, who made a tour of the B.P. and stopped off at Serowe to see Tshekedi in 1944. Through Cox's contacts with the Education Department at Oxford and with the help of Tshekedi's Cape Town attorney, Douglas Buchanan, Seretse secured admission to Oxford's most prestigious college, Balliol. It was assumed that the Roman-Dutch Law course which Seretse had completed at Fort Hare would substitute for the prerequisite of Latin normally required at Oxford. Seretse would study for the Bachelor of Common Laws (BCL) at Balliol, and might then proceed on one of the postgraduate courses offered to trainee district officers at Oxford for the Colonial and Dominions Offices. These courses were run by Margery Perham, Lord Lugard's successor as the ideologue of colonial administration, and another friend and admirer of Tshekedi after her visit to Serowe 15 years earlier.

Once again B.P. administrators objected. The bureaucrats in Mafikeng complained that Tshekedi had not consulted them properly before making firm arrangements, while the Serowe District Commissioner was quite satisfied on this score. Others said legal training in England would be inappropriate, as B.P. law (like Southern Rhodesia's) was based on the 1890 Cape Colony legal system of Roman-Dutch principles modified by Common Law precedents. At the bottom of their objections there lay, as before, fundamental dread and suspicion of Africans gaining access to and leverage from metropolitan ideas in Europe.

Resident Commissioner Forsyth Thompson minuted his fears of Seretse's head being filled in England with the subversive ideas of dangerous leftwingers like Professors Joad and Laski, at the London School of Economics, whose voices and ideas had been spread by wartime radio. A later Resident Commissioner, Anthony Sillery, took the more relaxed view that Tshekedi wanted Seretse to go to the supposed fountainhead of law, in order to return with the magic cargo that would counter a "world full of greedy industrialists and deceitful officials" back home in southern Africa. Legal education would make Seretse a difficult chief to deal with: Tshekedi's 'litigious mind' had already proved this.

It was true that Tshekedi believed that going to Oxford, and qualifications in English law, would give Seretse an advantage in dealing with colonial officials. But there were additional moral reasons why Tshekedi thought it would be good for Seretse to go to England. Tshekedi was worried by the 'anti-European' racism that Seretse had imbibed at Lovedale and Fort Hare. Seretse candidly acknowledged this 25 years later when he recalled that he had developed a
personal distaste for white people, 'because I thought they disliked me.' The solution, Tshekedi argued, was for Seretse to meet and mix with Europeans as ordinary people in Europe, rather than just seeing them as rulers and oppressors in Africa.

Even more worrying to Tshekedi was Seretse's lack of commitment to Christianity. England, which after all was the home of the London Missionary Society, might offer Seretse some Christian enlightenment. In an intimate letter written while Seretse was still at Fort Hare, Tshekedi had advised his nephew to adhere to God, as bogosi was ordained by God: 'As Chief when you are in difficulties, God is your only help and salvation. So my brother's son I advise you to put God first in your life.' Seretse had replied that he would tell his uncle during the holidays what had so far prevented him from becoming a professed Christian. We do not know what was said. But just before he entered Oxford University, Rev Haile of Tiger Kloof wrote to Rev Whitehouse at Oxford that he doubted if Seretse had 'any deep religious interests.'

The truth seems to have been that Seretse was developing his own brand of passive deism, rather than any active spirit of agnosticism or atheism. He was to remain highly critical of the feuding and factionalism within institutionalized religions. His favourite quotation summing up his views, consciously or unconsciously echoing the words of the late eighteenth century sceptical deist Thomas Paine, was: 'The world is my church, to do good my religion.'

After signing a pledge to satisfy the captain that he would eat the European food on board, Seretse boarded a ship at Cape Town on August 28th, 1945. He found fellow graduates from Fort Hare on board, going to study law in London on Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) government scholarships. So he promptly volunteered to abandon his single cabin, and opted instead to bunk in with the Northern Rhodesians. Victory in Europe (V.E.) day marking the defeat of Germany had been celebrated on May 7th. Victory in Asia had been achieved on August 14th, and V.J. (Victory against Japan) Day was celebrated on September 2nd while Seretse was on the high seas.

The land to which Seretse was sailing had been effectively bankrupted by 1941-42. (The process of decline, which would see Britain overtaken by Germany and the U.S.A., had begun at about the time when Seretse's grandfather had sailed to England in 1895.) But, unlike that of other countries in Europe, Britain's industrial capacity had not been largely destroyed by the Second World War. Now that the war was over, there was a new mood looking forward to economic reconstruction and to a more humane 'new society'. Hence, on July 26th, 1945, the British people had voted in a Labour Party government under the premiership of Clement Attlee, rejecting the Conservative Party alternative under the old wartime leader Winston Churchill.

Seretse's ship docked in the great, grimy, north-western city of Liverpool. Port facilities on the south coast, at Southampton, to which Cape and Indian Ocean ships usually ran in peacetime, still lay largely in ruins from German bombing. We can only guess at the thoughts of Seretse and the few other African students
on board the ship from Cape Town on arriving at Liverpool. No doubt they were surprised, as were other Indian and African visitors, at seeing an army of white (though in truth grey-faced) dock workers in flat caps boarding the ship as soon as it docked, to perform tasks of manual labour reserved for people of colour in the colonies. No doubt Seretse also had cause to reflect on the novel dialect of English spoken in Liverpool, as he negotiated himself and his baggage onto the train for London.

There was no one to meet Seretse off the steam train which arrived at London’s Euston railway terminal a few hours later. The Dominions Office in London knew of his arrival, but Tshekedi had made sure that it was the responsibility of the London Missionary Society to meet him and look after him as his guardians during his time in England. After a cable from Seretse - who was more used to the telegraph than the telephone in Africa - the

L.M.S. sent round to Euston station the Rev Cocker Brown, scion of a southern African missionary family, to take Seretse to Peckham in southeast London where he was to stay.

Seretse spent his first few nights in England in the household of Dr Harold Moody at 164 Queen's Road, Peckham. It was a poor neighbourhood, consisting of tall, soot-blackened Victorian and Edwardian terrace houses, with busy streets that had been badly bombed during the war. There were numerous gaps between the houses, so called bomb-sites, consisting of the bare basements of former houses where green weeds sprang from cracks in the bricks and concrete. Perhaps Seretse was fortunate enough to experience some belated summer sun, but most likely in late September he endured grey overcast days and streets wet from drizzling rain.

Harold Moody was yet another friend or connection of Tshekedi's. He was a black British physician who managed to combine leadership of the local African-Caribbean community with respectability and refinement in the eyes of the British establishment, a combination much like Tshekedi’s own status. Seretse no doubt heard how Moody's son, as one of the few black officers in British Army regiments, had had the wartime experience of stepping off a ship in Cape Town and having to be sheltered from local colour discrimination by his fellow officers.43 But Seretse was given little time to relax, as he was whisked around London during his first few days, meeting dignitaries.

Seretse Khama had arrived in London during the celebrations of the 150th jubilee of the founding of the London Missionary Society. This was a strange coincidence as his grandfather, Khama the Great, had been the star guest 50 years earlier at the centennial jubilee celebrations of the L.M.S. in 1895. Thus Seretse found himself lionized in London. Under the charge of Rev Maurice Watts, Seretse was formally introduced to the jubilee meeting of the L.M.S. board of directors; and was taken to a service of thanksgiving celebrated - somewhat mysteriously for a predominantly Congregational organization - at Westminster Abbey. He then had tea with the Lord Mayor of London at the Mansion House in the City, and was taken to address a large meeting of L.M.S. jubilee celebrants at the Holborn Hall.
All these engagements happened on the same day. It is scarcely surprising that Seretse soon wrote complaining to his uncle: 'Ever since I arrived in England I have been addressing one meeting after the other, so much that I am now anxious to be at Oxford.'4

At the beginning of October 1945, Seretse was admitted as an undergraduate student to Balliol College at Oxford. Balliol was regarded as the most elite college at England's most elite university, producing the intellectual cream of the country who displayed 'effortless superiority.'45 Seretse was allocated to Prof. Sir Reginald Coupland as his academic adviser. Coupland, a friend of Douglas Buchanan, was the doyen of historians of British imperialism. His main work was a moralizing study which justified British imperialism as an anti-slavery movement, which earned the quip that imperial historians were like chaplains on a pirate ship. He had also just published a study of Dr Livingstone's last journey and was preparing a study of the British defeat by the Zulu at Isandhlwana in 1879. Coupland took to Seretse immediately: 'What a very good sort he is. I am sure he is going to get a lot of good out of Oxford" he wrote to Buchanan.46

However, Seretse ran into immediate problems with registration for a BCL degree. Latin reared its ugly head once again. Coupland, by most accounts a rather bumbling, confused character, was not prepared to press the case on the university authorities for Seretse's course in Roman-Dutch Law being a substitute for Latin as a prerequisite.47 The subject which had dogged his academic footsteps ever since Tiger Kloof days now threatened to scupper his plans for legal training. Seretse responded in a practical manner, proposing to hire a private tutor to cram the required Latin. Tshekedi encouraged this. But Coupland advised Seretse to do a first degree in 'Modern Greats' instead of a BCL. This degree had been designed after the First World War, specifically for students without prior knowledge of Greek or Latin. It consisted of courses in Philosophy, Politics and Economics ('P.P.E.'). Buchanan expressed misgivings, stressing that the future ruler of the Bangwato needed legal education rather than the generalized training of the mind which Coupland was recommending. Seretse needed the legal skills to interpret proclamations, statutes, contracts, concessions and so on, without resort to the specialized advice of lawyers. Tshekedi's opinion was sought, and was forthright and emphatic. He cabled his nephew: 'Continue with your B.C.L. for a while before changing to P.P.E.'48

To sugar the pill, Seretse's tutors agreed that Philosophy be dropped in favour of Law in his 'Modern Greats' programme of study. The Law course would not require knowledge of Latin, as it would deal with contracts and interpretation of statutes. In December 1945 Lindsay, the Master of Balliol, informed Tshekedi that his nephew would study Law of Contracts as his principal subject, sitting the examination in June 1946. His subsidiary subjects would be Politics and Economics to be examined in June 1947. The whole course would earn Seretse a
Bachelor of Arts degree in two years. (His previous B.A. giving him a year's credit off the usual three years.)

The plan was for Seretse to join one of the Inns of Court in London concurrently, spending 1947-48 preparing for the final Bar examinations. Thus he would emerge at the end of 1948 as a qualified barrister with an Oxford B.A. Seretse himself thought the preparation time planned for the Bar exams rather over-optimistic. He anticipated returning home in 1949 rather than 1948, but was fully determined to stick out the course.49

The prestige of his uncle as an enlightened and progressive ruler ensured that Seretse was invited to the homes or college rooms of prominent academics such as Margery Perham and Sir Alan Pim, the imperial economist who had toured and reported on Bechuanaland in 1932. Seretse was also regularly invited for weekends at the house of Douglas Buchanan's brother John at High Wycombe, a manufacturing town on the road from Oxford to London.

Getting to know fellow students proved to be more difficult. As Lady Khama now puts it, during his first term or so at Oxford, Seretse found the English the dullest and most unfriendly people he had ever met. 50 As the nights grew longer and the skies ever greyer, Seretse became miserable in the unfamiliar climate that was damp as well as cool. College rooms made of stone and wood were almost designed to be cold, and there was a lack of heating because of national coal shortages.

When Seretse later met Batswana soldiers, who had come for the Victory Day Parade in London in 1946, he indicated to them that he was not much taken with British culture. 'The English like to show you their nice side, but they hide their poverty and slums.'

There were two different and equally alien groups of undergraduates in the single sex colleges of Oxford. (Men's colleges were in the centre of town; women students were strange creatures who appeared on bicycles before lectures, riding off again afterwards back to women's colleges on the periphery.) One group of undergraduates was of recent school-leavers, usually products of upper class education and expectations, who were lacking in experience of a wider world. The other group of undergraduates was of men more Seretse's age, by no means all upper class, who were being rewarded with university education for their war service. Their experience of life and death was in many ways deeper than Seretse's. But Seretse, the strange young upper class African seen in the cloisters and corridors, was initially excluded from their camaraderie, having no common war experiences to swap reminiscences about. Small wonder that Seretse absolutely hated his first term at Oxford, and by Christmas was deep in the pit of 'culture shock'."5

It was his sporting prowess and growing love of jazz that enabled Seretse to break through social barriers during his second term at Oxford, in early 1946. He had the chance to show off his existing prowess at soccer, boxing and athletics. More to the point he joined in and developed his prowess in the English upper class sports of rugby and, by the third term, cricket. He also discovered other jazz fans among his fellow students. His tastes ran from Jelly-Roll Morton through to
Count Basie, but never warmed to the insipid big band sound of Glenn Miller and others who were more popular in post-war Britain. Seretse, already a fan of English and Scottish soccer teams back home, now followed their fortunes as a radio fan. For reasons impossible to discover his chosen team was Wolverhampton Wanderers ('Wolves'). He also followed horse-racing but never bet on horses or on the football pools. Seretse joined friends on the spectator terraces of rugby and soccer matches. He also attended meetings of all political parties represented at Oxford, except the Conservatives - thus missing any encounter with the future prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who was an undergraduate at the time.52 Seretse's closest friends at Oxford proved to be intellectuals rather than sportsmen. One was John Zimmerman, an outsider like Seretse because he was Jewish. Another was a socialist aristocrat called Tony Wedgwood Benn, who had flown over Bangwato territory when training with the Royal Air Force in Bulawayo. Seretse and Tony Benn, the heir to the title of Labour politician Lord Stansgate, were to remain close friends for life: Seretse sometimes mockingly addressed Benn as 'My Lord. There was also a young don (lecturer) called Roland Brown, who was friendly with Seretse. Brown was later to make his name as the man whose report helped nationalize Zambia's copper mines in the 1960s. Just before his first examination in Law in June 1946, his tutors dropped a bombshell. Seretse would not be allowed to sit the examinations because his programme of study was not valid under university regulations. The exemption of Latin or Greek was only valid if the candidate had done military service. And Seretse needed a modern (i.e. European) language such as French, German or Spanish to do the Economics course, which in any case would earn him only a diploma and not a degree. Seretse despaired after having wasted so much time on a wild-goose chase. But he was determined not to return to Bechuanaland without a professional qualification. He decided to abandon Oxford, and to study for the Bar exams in London instead. It would take at least two years to qualify as a barrister - possibly even three years, to eat the number of dinners in hall which an Inn of Court might require before it admitted a student to the Bar. Tshekediri and Buchanan were furious with Balliol and Oxford in general and with Coupland in particular. They felt that Oxford, having got Seretse in this 'mess', should get him out of it. They wanted Seretse to continue at Oxford, as they believed that London with its numerous distractions was not conducive to study. Coupland for his part blamed changes in university regulations: on the question of military service he said he had assumed that every young man in the Empire below 40 years of age had done his duty. Coupland held out the possibility of Seretse completing a B.A. just in Economics and Politics with the help of Messrs Fulton and Allan as sympathetic and liberal-minded tutors. But Seretse did not want a general degree without Law. He was disposed to take the advice of other dons that it would be best to go straight to the Inns of Court in London, where he could sign up a tutor to coach him through the Bar exams." Ever mindful of the needs of the future kgosi, this time as the leader
of progressive agriculture, Tshekedi arranged for Seretse to spend the summer vacation of 1946 at a voluntary work camp on a dairy farm in Northumberland. He worked as an unpaid farm-hand during July-August, and immensely enjoyed the experience of living and working among farm labourers and student volunteers. Summer farming camps had developed out of the tradition of voluntary 'digging for victory' during the Second World War in Britain, and they appealed to the new socialist spirit among educated youth.

At the end of the summer vacation, Seretse abandoned Oxford despite the continuing protests of Sir Reginald Coupland. He moved his possessions to London to study for the Bar. He had taken time to finally make up his mind, but was quite determined once he had done so. He registered for studies at the Inns of Court (Inner Temple) and took up residence at a hostel for colonial students, Nutford House, on Brown Street, north of Marble Arch.

Seretse joked to his uncle that he should qualify as a lawyer so that he would have a profession if ever South Africa took over the B.P. and abolished the bogosi of the Bangwato.

General Smuts, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, expected Britain to hand over Basutoland, the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Swaziland to the Union as a reward for his personal services in the war. Smuts had sat in on wartime Cabinet meetings with Clement Attlee, the new Labour Prime Minister, and in 1945 had drafted the preamble to the Charter of the new United Nations Organisation - full of high sounding phrases like 'inalienable human rights'. Attlee saw Smuts as a special case for reward.

The question of the transfer of the 'High Commission Territories' to the Union of South Africa was raised in the Westminster parliament by the left-wing M.P. Tom Driberg in January 1946. Tshekedi responded by recruiting the A.N.C. of South Africa through its leader Dr A.B. Xuma to add its voice against transfer. It was also the threat of transfer which explains why Tshekedi decided to publicly attack Smuts at his weakest point - South West Africa (Namibia) - where the principles contained in the preamble to the Charter of the Union Nations were contradicted by actual policies in the mandated territory.

The transfer issue was brought to a head in April 1946 when Attlee, in deference to Smuts, sacked his junior minister for Dominion Affairs, John Parker, for having dared to oppose transfer in principle. Parker, whose main interest was Basutoland, saw transfer as betrayal of the African soldiers in the Territories who had served the Empire so well in the war. Much of this appeared in The Times and other newspapers, and Seretse was well aware of it.

During 1946, Seretse took some of them round London. The British Army was also in the process of recruiting soldiers for a new High Commission Territories Pioneer Corps, to serve in North Africa and Palestine. This and the row over Parker helped to stave off the South African threat to the Territories until 1948.
The new National Party government then protested against the arming of 'natives' on the borders of the Union, and Britain deferentially disbanded the H.C.T. Pioneer Corps.

By July 1947 Tshekedi was writing gleefully to the Rev J.H.L. Burns, a former L.M.S. pastor at Serowe, now living in Edinburgh:

I heard from Seretse lately ... he has done well so far. He has passed his examinations in the Law of Torts, the Law of Contracts, Roman Dutch Law and Roman Law. He hopes to take his final examinations some time next year in Constitutional Law and Criminal Law. He hopes to return to South Africa during the year 1949.57

Seretse's hard work in the 1946-47 academic year had paid off. He had also blossomed in other respects because of his move to London. Nutford House and the Inns of Court threw him together with fellow students from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

There were sometimes tensions between the main groups of students at Nutford House, African-Caribbeans and West Africans, but Seretse as a southern African moved easily between them. Seretse's closest friends at Nutford House were to be Charles Njonjo from Kenya, who joined Seretse in 1947 after graduating from Fort Hare in 1946, and Forbes Burnham from British Guiana, the future Prime Minister of Guyana.

The other southern Africans at Nutford House were mostly Northern Rhodesians (Zambians). Seretse shared a room with one of them, whom he had first met in 1945 on the ship from Cape Town. The leader of the Northern Rhodesians was Harry Nkumbula, a witty, gregarious and harddrinking student at the London School of Economics. There was also, not far from Marble Arch, in the once grand but now rundown suburb of Brondesbury, a sombre physician from Nyasaland (Malawi) named Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who kept open house for students from southern Africa.

'Pan-Africanism' had taken fire among students of African descent in Britain after the (5th) Pan-African Congress of delegates from Africa and other continents, held at Manchester town hall in October 1945. Seretse had missed out on the excitement during his year at Oxford, but his 'Africanist' background at Fort Hare enabled him to get back into the swim of ideas. The coming together of so many students from the colonial world,

at a time when India was advancing rapidly to independence, and while the heady enthusiasm of the Labour government for setting up a welfare state in Britain persisted, made a profound impression on Seretse. It is not clear if one could call him either a nationalist or a socialist at that stage. But, as Lady Khama puts it, he invariably became involved with political opinion 'left of the Conservative Party.'s Seretse developed his taste for jazz still further, building up a collection of 10" and 12" jazz records. Jazz seems to have affected his language too: he used to refer to it as 'sweet, sweet music.' He also continued to go alone in the afternoons or early evenings to cinemas showing cowboy or detective films, as well as reading such literature in cheap paperback editions. He still had no time for
classical music nor much for live theatre, except when comedies or thrillers were being staged. Musical shows, apart from 'Porgy and Bess' left him cold.59 'American Negro' popular music and jazz had become more popular than ever in Britain during the latter part of the Second World War, visibly reinforced by the presence of 'Negro' soldiers. The millions of American servicemen in Britain in the latter years of the war had excited a mixture of admiration and jealousy, usually summed up as 'over-paid, over-sexed, and worst of all over-here.' In the case of African-Americans this had brought out the contradictions of their being racially segregated within the U.S. Army.

Racial consciousness in British urban society had been raised by an incident in 1944 at the Russell Hotel in Russell Square near General Eisenhower's bunker. The African-Caribbean cricketer Learie Constantine was refused accommodation there on the grounds that it would offend the hotel's white American clientele.60 Black people in Britain continued to suffer much casual racial discrimination, particularly in finding accommodation. But some of the 'Negro' glamour also rubbed off in the eyes of the British public on West Indian workers and West African students, who began to flock to Britain after the war.

Seretse was taken in hand on behalf of the L.M.S. by Dr Roger Pilkington, a distinguished geneticist at London University. Seretse often went to his house in View Road, Highgate, overlooking Hampstead Heath, for Sunday lunch with the Pilkington family. Pilkington appears to have become a close friend. He found Seretse 'most trustworthy and straight; intelligent, of high character and in every way most suitable for chieftainship.'61

Seretse was dedicated to his studies during that first year in London. But he grew less bookish as his social life improved. He was by now smoking and drinking - both forbidden sins back home with Tshekedi. Seretse had no doubt been introduced to the strange flat taste of southern English beer in Oxford public houses; and heavy smoking of cigarettes was characteristic of young war veterans. Now in London he was led further 'astray' in pubs and bars by people like Harry Nkumbula. But, as yet, there were no girlfriends in sight.

It was an uncharacteristically hot night in June 1947 when Seretse first saw Ruth Williams. She had been brought along to an evening supper and dance at Nutford House by her sister Muriel. Muriel was older and more serious than her sister. She neither smoked nor drank, enjoyed classical music and regularly attended church. It was as a good Congregationalist that she took an interest in the colonial students' hostel, particularly in students affiliated with the London Missionary Society. She often led discussion groups in the lounge.

Some days earlier, Muriel Williams had invited three of the L.M.S. affiliated students from Nutford House for afternoon tea back at the Williams' flat in Lewisham. Her parents, who might be censorious, were away on a holiday cruise. Seretse from Bechuanaland was meant to go along with two students from Northern Rhodesia, but declined at the last moment on account of the stiflingly hot weather. In the Lewisham flat the students met Muriel's strikingly attractive
younger sister, who had baked a cake for them. She demonstrated with her own
records how different her musical tastes were to those of her sister's; and the two
Northern Rhodesians told her how much she had in common with their friend
who had stayed behind. They then invited Muriel and Ruth as their guests to the
next hospitality evening at Nutford House. The die was thereby cast for Seretse
and Ruth to eventually meet.62
Hospitality evenings at Nutford House were somewhat starchy occasions, as the
hostel staff kept a stern eye on all the proceedings. They were most concerned to
exclude 'flashy' girls and untoward goings-on from the evening's entertainment.63
The evening began with sherry in the warden's flat, and proceeded through supper
to dancing to danceband music, played by a small band or on records in the
lounge. Seretse Khama first saw Ruth Williams among the young men and
women invited for sherry in the warden's flat. 'When I saw Ruth, a later report has
Seretse gushing, 'with her striking reddish-blond hair and blue eyes, I was
immediately attracted to her.'64 (In fact one eye was grey-green, the other was
grey-blue.) Lady Khama now doubts that Seretse noticed her at all, as
introductions were rudimentary all round the group.
Ruth, who loved to dance and was good at it, thoroughly enjoyed herself that
evening. It seemed as if every young man asked to dance with her, except Seretse
who remained a wallflower. He liked to watch dancing, but was always reluctant
to join in. Not until late in the evening was he taken across the room to meet Ruth
by Braim Nkhondo, one of the two Northern Rhodesians who had been to
Lewisham. 'It was not a case of love at first
sight' Seretse was to admit. They enjoyed each other's company on this and
subsequent occasions - each time Ruth accompanied Muriel to Nutford House.
Ruth gradually dissolved Seretse's shyness. He told her all about Bechuanaland,
about his uncle Tshekedi, and about the chieftainship that awaited him on his
return home.
Ruth also told Seretse about herself. Like Seretse, she was a sports lover, though
her tastes stretched to more graceful activities like ice-skating. Her life had been
very different from Seretse's. Two years younger than him, she had been born and
brought up on the suburban slopes south of Blackheath and Greenwich. Her father
had once been a junior army officer in India, and was now a commercial traveller.
Ruth's own experience of foreign parts had been limited to trips by car around
northern France and Belgium as a teenager with her parents, in the years
immediately before the Second World War.
After high school she had gone on to take cookery classes at a technical institute.
Then the war had come. A couple of months short of her 16th birthday, she had
been evacuated from London to a country cottage in Sussex (on an estate which
later became the country home of Lord and Lady Longford). Ruth had been
separated from her sister Muriel, who was a year older than her. Muriel had been
sent to a village in Wales, where she had become a member of the Congregational
Church, while Ruth remained an Anglican like the rest of her family. Ruth
Williams became very ill with anaemia as a refugee in Sussex, and returned home
to Blackheath Park for convalescence. She had then found work in a confectionery business as a junior employee.

At about this time, the phony war ended and London was subjected to the blitz of intensive German aerial bombing. On September 7th, 1940, German aircraft began saturation bombing of the dockyards, munitions factories and railway marshalling yards along the River Thames. Ruth Williams recalled standing on Greenwich hill, next to the Wolfe monument and the Royal Observatory, on the next morning - with the whole of the docklands and the East End to the north a panorama of smoke and flame below her.

On the night of September 15th, the peak of the blitz, the houses on both sides of the Williams' home in Meadowcourt Road were destroyed by a stick of German bombs. Ruth and her family were sheltering in the cellar of a public house at the time. The Williams' house was structurally unsound and had to be demolished. While sheltering with an aunt in north London, the family had to look around for new accommodation. They found a ground floor flat (No.3) in Belmont Hall Court, a large modern redbrick building off Belmont Hill, where exclusive Blackheath sloped down into the populous suburb of Lewisham in the valley.

Ruth Williams joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) in 1941 at the age of 17, as soon as she was old enough to enlist. She already had a driving licence, so for the next four to five years she was a WAAF driver. At first she drove crash ambulances ('blood-wagons') and air-crew trucks on Sussex coast emergency landing strips of No.11 Group R.A.F. Fighter Command - as near to a combatant role in war as it was possible for a woman to get. Later, she drove scientists and staff officers around in the relative safety of Uxbridge in west London - a role many years later glamorized in retrospect by the revelation that just such a woman staff driver (though Army rather than WAAF) had been General Eisenhower's secret lover.

On being 'demobbed' (demobilized) in 1946, Ruth Williams had searched for a responsible job befitting a young independent woman. She had become a confidential clerk in a Lloyd's firm of insurance underwriters in the City of London. The pencil slim 24-year-old who came to the lounge of Nutford House, 'simply and neatly dressed' at her own expense, was therefore a formidable young woman of the modern type, moulded by the upheavals of the Second World War. It was not until at least three months after that June evening that Seretse dared ask Ruth for a date. He had already gone out and bought two theatre tickets for a show featuring the 'Inkspots' Ruth's favourite group of closeharmony American singers, then at the height of their fame. Standing nervously on the landing at Nutford House, he phoned Ruth from the public phone on the wall. She agreed to go with him to the show.

It was a few days after they had enjoyed the 'Inkspots' together that Seretse first ventured to broach the topic of romance. Lady Khama challenges its authenticity, but an account in the popular magazine Ebony has Seretse asking her: 'Ruth, do you think you could love me?', and then holding his breath. She says not a word, but: 'The light in her sky-blue eyes and the smile on her face told me what I
wanted to know. She did love me, and I knew for certain that this was the woman I wanted for my wife.'66

Over the coming winter and spring of 1947-48 the staff at Nutford House witnessed a remarkable transformation in the quiet young man from Bechuanaland. Seretse, 'who did not go about with girls as did most students, was seen to blossom in the company of Ruth. The Nutford House staff greatly approved of Ruth Williams, because she was always 'perfectly mannered.' She was also 'obviously fond of dancing, which she did well - usually with Seretse.' Love helped Seretse to grow as a person. The situation is summed up by Mary Benson, who was Tshekedi's sometime personal assistant and later his biographer, when she said that Seretse found in Ruth 'companionship and understanding, and a sense of resolution and completeness that he had lacked'"67

Seretse slowly dropped from the visibility of Dr Pilkington at Highgate. Nor did he even hint about Ruth in letters to Tshekedi. As far as Tshekedi was concerned, 'Sonny' was studying hard to complete his law studies and to pass the Bar exams so that he could return home as soon as possible after December 1948. But love is a time-consuming mistress, and Seretse's study hours were frittered away either with Ruth or in thinking about her.

Tshekedi was much too busy to pay much attention to the lapse in correspondence with Seretse. He was preoccupied with both internal affairs within his Reserve and international affairs beyond the borders of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Much to the chagrin of the British, who regarded external affairs as their prerogative, Tshekedi had gone onto the offensive against General Smuts and South African expansionism. Smuts expected the United Nations as the successor to the League of Nations to allow the incorporation of South West Africa into the Union of South Africa. His formal request was made on January 17th, 1946. Tshekedi sprang into action as a one man lobby on the British government to block Smuts, and to get South West Africa put under British or United Nations rule instead. He saw such freedom for South West Africa as the only chance for Bechuanaland to break free from South African economic hegemony, after the construction of a railway to carry coal exports from Bechuanaland to a South West African port.

For six months Tshekedi badgered the British in private correspondence to refuse South Africa's request 'until its native policy of permanent suppression of African natives be ended.' He recruited the other chiefs of the B.P. onto his side, and contacted his allies in London such as the AntiSlavery Society. After months of unsuccessfully pleading for official permission to go to London or New York to represent the case against Smuts, Tshekedi went public. He denounced the 'oppressive, imperialist tendencies' of the Union of South Africa, and was in turn denounced in the Afrikaans press as a 'very large cock on a very small dung heap.' Tshekedi failed to reach New York to put his case before the United Nations. But he succeeded in publishing a pamphlet, The Case for Bechuanaland. He also gained the ear of the new nationalist government of India, through its High Commissioner in Pretoria, to speak up for South West Africa in the United Nations. Finally Tshekedi recruited and financed a radical Anglican priest, a
follower of Mahatma Gandhi with Indian experience, Rev Michael Scott, to go to the United Nations in his stead.68

Tshekedi thereby re-established his credentials in liberal and radical circles overseas, and annoyed his masters in the High Commissioner's office in Pretoria and the Dominions (now being renamed Commonwealth Relations)

Office in London. Within the B.P., however, the local colonial authorities remained beholden to his despotic style of 'tribal' administration.

This could be seen in the way in which the Resident Commissioner, Anthony Sillery, went along with Tshekedi's ruthless solution to long-standing problems with one of his Bakalanga chiefdoms - that of the Bakanswazwi under Kgosi John Nswazwi (Mswazi). Tshekedi's solution was to expel the Bakanswazwi into Southern Rhodesia in 1947, after that self-governing colony had been persuaded by the British authorities to accept them. In later years, Sillery regretted the way in which he had fallen in with Tshekedi and had permitted violence to be used to achieve the expulsion. His explanation was that Tshekedi, supremely confident and assured, fixed him with penetrating eyes and danced before him waving his arms and endlessly talking. He had been mesmerized like a snake by a mongoose.69

The relationship between the Batswana of the B.P. as a whole with the British crown was reaffirmed in person by the visit of the British royal family in April 1947. King George VI, accompanied by his wife and two daughters, Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret, toured his several colonies and one Dominion in southern Africa as a gesture of thanksgiving for their efforts in the war. Tshekedi, however, refused to accept a decoration from the King, because of the way he had been treated by the British government over the issue of South West Africa.

Tshekedi was expected by the Commonwealth Relations Office in London to simply revert back to the status quo of 1939 - from a migrant labour economy serving war needs, to one serving the needs of the South African gold mines. The inevitable corollary to such economic incorporation was political incorporation into the Union of South Africa.70

Tshekedi nursed a counter-vision, inherited from his father, of developing the internal potential of the country. 'Tshekedi's policy is obvious,' two admiring British visitors, Jenny and Sydney Elliot, remarked in early 1948: 'It is to make the Bamangwato economically self-supporting, to develop a healthy cultural interest and provide, within the tribe's own territory, a modernised tribal life which will prevent the drift of young men and women to the Union.'71

At about the same time as the Elliots' tour Tshekedi was visited by Martin Flavin, a Pulitzer prize-winning American novelist cum journalist. Flavin remarked on the enormous energies being poured by 'the Native Boss of Bechuanaland' and the Bangwato into the construction of 'the Bechuana Secondary School' at Moeng in the Tswapong hills. Labour-intensive schemes such as this were employing young men in return for food, while capital costs were covered by cattle levies. While people he talked to were proud of their achievements under Tshekedi's direction, Flavin also caught some of the resentment building up as people were driven ever harder. 72
Tshekedi's rule may have been enlightened despotism, but it was despotism all the same. The Elliots added that Tshekedi was looking forward to new personal freedom in the next year or so when Seretse returned home as kgosi. He might still be engaged in administrative work, but he would be free 'to help the political development of the Black man' - in Bechuanaland and Africa as a whole, rather than just among the Bangwato.

Seretse had stepped out of one world into another. From the racial and national tensions of southern Africa into an almost defeated country in Europe that was being reconstructed after surviving the Second World War. The two worlds had seemed barely connected at first for Seretse, alone at Oxford. It was not until he moved to cosmopolitan student circles in London that he was able to reconnect with the world of Pan-African politics.

These two worlds were to come into increasing contact and conflict from the later 1940s onwards. Nationalist movements in Asia and Africa made increasing demands on Britain for their political and economic independence, at the same time as African-Caribbean immigrants became conspicuous settlers in Britain. Seretse was soon to become a figure who, more than any other individual, symbolized the bringing together of these two worlds at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s.

Chapter 4
MARRIAGE
1948-50

In June 1948, exactly a year after they had first met, Seretse asked Ruth Williams to marry him. She agreed, and they began to make arrangements at the beginning of September. Seretse moved out of Nutford House and into a tiny flat at No 10 Campden Hill Gardens, near an attractive small square in Kensington south of Notting Hill Gate. Seretse had given the London Missionary Society as his reference, and the rent was four guineas a week. The marriage was then booked for October 2nd at St George's, the Anglican church at the end of the road, giving the vicar time to call the banns for the marriage, on three consecutive Sundays. Seretse now summoned up the courage to tell his uncle. Taking a sixpenny airmail letter-form, he began 'Dear Father,' and slipped into an explanation of his new address before coming to the matter of marriage. He anticipated difficulty from the Bangwato, who might deprive him of the right to rule: 'I shall still return home whenever you say to serve them in any capacity.' But he expressed every confidence in his uncle:

I have assured her that no matter how hostile everybody might be at home, nevertheless she will find you & mother most considerate & kind, & you will do all you can to make us feel welcome.'

Wishful thinking indeed. This brought him to the matter of money: 'No matter how you feel please send me the necessary funds as soon as possible to enable us to start at least without financial worries.' He ended,

Please do not try to stop me father, I want to go through with it. I hope you will appreciate the urgency of my request - I do need help.
Seretse
The letter was sent on September 13th. It arrived in Tshekedi’s hands on the building site of Bamangwato College at Moeng, deep in the Tsawapong Hills, ten days later. Resident Commissioner Sillery had accompanied Tshekedi to Moeng, and was inspecting the building of the dam there. ‘On that fateful day,’ records Sillery, 'Tshekedi came to see me with a face like a fiddle and showed me a letter or telegram.’2 Both men then rushed in their vehicles to Palapye post-office. Sillery got through on the phone to the High Commissioner in Pretoria, while Tshekedi cabled Seretse in London and Buchanan, his lawyer, in Cape Town.

Seretse received Tshekedi’s overnight telegram, delivered to his door, on the morning of Friday, September 24th. 'Get ready to leave at moment's notice. I can only discuss your proposal personally after your arrival here.' If Tshekedi meant to preempt the marriage, the couple were not gulled; they walked to the church on the corner and arranged for the ceremony to be brought forward to the very next day. Seretse also invited Pilkington, his L.M.S. guardian, to the wedding.

The story of the cops-and-robbers chase of lovers and ecclesiastical envoys around Kensington on Saturday, September 25th, was later compiled by Tshekedi in the form of letters from Pilkington and others. (The story has since been related in print a number of times.3) It culminated in the tearful couple being denied the sacrament of marriage by no less than the Bishop of London himself, in full cope and mitre. In Seretse's words:

Ruth and I both protested strenuously. But it was Ruth, standing there with tears in her eyes, who raised the question that (no one) could answer: "Does the church want to force me to live in sin?"4

Over the next few days, the Commonwealth and Colonial Offices tried, and failed, to bring in Harry Nkumbula of Northern Rhodesia to dissuade Seretse; and concluded that marriages between people of different races could only be stopped in Scottish law, not in English law.5 Pressure mounted on Seretse and Ruth to opt for a civil marriage. Tshekedi was already arranging for Seretse to fly as soon as possible - at a cost of £50 one-way, to be borne by the Bangwato treasury.

Seretse Khama and Ruth Williams were married by the registrar of births, deaths and marriages in the Kensington town hall on Wednesday, September 29th, 1948, at about 10 in the morning. Seretse's Oxford friend, John Zimmerman, and Ruth's sister, Muriel, were the witnesses. After the celebrations, Seretse cabled Tshekedi with the news and requested two airtickets. Pilkington feared to contact Seretse because, he said, ‘it is safe to assume that I have sunk, for the moment, from the position of his best friend to his worst enemy.’ Old Professor Coupland at Oxford was as selfjustificatory as ever: ‘I shall always think the trouble would not have occurred if my advice to keep Seretse in Oxford had been taken.’6 Seretse flew out, on the sole ticket sent by Tshekedi, on October 21st. Five days earlier, he had been quoted in the first report to have appeared on the marriage in the British press: 'I gather my uncle and his councillors may think differently of
having me as chief now I have a white wife ... whatever happens I will be either coming back to London for Ruth or sending for her.7
From this moment on, the press began to take an interest in events. The

Johannesburg press trailed Seretse back home to Serowe. The London press pestered Ruth, and began the annoying habit of referring to her as a London 'typist'. I (A slur on a secretary who actually employed a typist, and which has resulted in her resisting learning to type ever since.) Seretse arrived back home on October 25th. Disapproval of his marriage by the leading elders and royal uncles was shown at the welcoming kgotla. Seretse was then kept sitting around, awaiting a full kgotla assembly of all adult men.
Tshekedi was playing for time, hoping to break down Seretse's resolution through old routines and familiar sights. Tshekedi found him respectful but suspiciously quiet, moody and prone to bursting into tears. 'My impression” minuted Gerald Nettelton, the Government Secretary and second highest official in Bechuanaland, 'is that he is being told frequently and bluntly that every possible step is going to be taken to break the marriage down.'9
Seretse responded by moving out of Tshekedi's household into that of another 'uncle' (in fact his grandfather's brother's son), Serogola Seretse. Serogola, who had previously quarrelled with Tshekedi after acting as his deputy for many years, was bristling at the fact that Tshekedi was presenting his personal views to the British authorities as being those of the Bangwato as a whole.
Nettelton and other long-serving officials advised their superiors in Mafikeng and Pretoria that 'it was just another Ngwato row'. which would blow over. Nettelton, cautious and cynical in conversation but immensely knowledgeable about the Protectorate, told Sillery, the Resident Commissioner at Mafikeng: 'We all know who will always run the Ngwato Tshekedi of course.' Before they actually met Ruth in person, the assumption held among Bangwato and British establishment figures alike was that Seretse's white wife was an 'adventuress' who would tire of her experiment in good time - leading to a divorce and the restitution of normality. All that was needed was for the authorities to hang on, and to delay the processes of law and administration that must otherwise deal with the problem.'0
The kgotla assembly that eventually gathered on November 15th, 1948, consisted of adult men from Serowe and its environs, and headmen and elders from outlying areas of the Reserve. They sat and deliberated for five days. Tshekedi sat as president of the debate, seated with Seretse and the royal uncles, facing the crowd. The consensus, as expressed by 85 speakers, was that everyone wanted Seretse as kgosi but no one wanted his English wife as mohumagadi. Only seven speakers spoke up for both together.
When Seretse spoke, he stood up to speak like a common man instead of remaining seated in the superior tradition of royalty. He spoke simply and briefly, gently playing on popular fears that people would be stuck with Tshekedi as chief if his succession was blocked. What must have particularly
stung Tshekedi, the empire patriot who had done so much to help Britain in its German war, was Seretse's suggestion that his uncle had resorted to German (i.e. Nazi) methods of intimidation to break down the marriage. Subsequent speeches from the body of the kgotla assembly continued to denounce Seretse and his marriage. Eventually Seretse exploded in peevish frustration at Tshekedi's chairmanship: 'Whether the Chief speaks loudly or softly, I will always regard it as a reprimand and as a stifling of freedom of speech.' At another point he snapped at old Gaofetoge Mathiba, his late mother's consort: 'I object very strongly to Mathiba saying he loves me. I hate him.' After Serogola was involved in some minor - unfortunately unrecorded - altercation in the kgotla, one of Tshekedi's supporters accused Seretse of being a football bladder pumped up by evil men.

On the third and fourth days of the kgotla, Tshekedi brought in his old ally Kgosi Bathoen II of the Bangwaketse. Bathoen led the attack. Once again, as in his public scourging of Seretse in 1942, Bathoen used the disarming ploy of accusing Seretse of being a coward. Seretse had protested that he loved his people, as well as his wife, but Bathoen retorted: 'Nobody can cast fire among people he loves ...' Seretse was cut to the quick. It was to be 20 years before he could deliver a stinging public rebuke back at Bathoen, on Bathoen's home ground at Kanye in 1969.

Tshekedi spoke last, and at great length, rambling between summing up the sense of the meeting and his own emotions. He began with a dig at the colonial administration for bothering to send the District Commissioner to record the meeting, a rare example of listening so closely to the people's feelings. He thanked the other Batswana chiefs for coming along to put water on the Bangwato fire. He turned to Seretse, claiming to be heartbroken by his ingratitude. He then played his trump card, threatening to exile himself - the implication was that civil governance would collapse under the unready sole rule of Seretse.

I will not contest the town [i.e.the state] with you. I will not divide it with you, nor will I be here with your woman. Tshekedi's underlying message to Seretse was clear: drop your wife and be kgosi, or stay away with her and leave bogosi to me. It was now Saturday lunchtime. The District Commissioner was asked to close the session with a few words. He announced the birth of a future monarch in Britain, Prince Charles. He then turned to Seretse, and simply said: 'You have heard your fathers speaking to you. Do not disregard them.'

Seretse stayed in Serowe beyond Christmas, giving false hope to those who prayed he might yet abandon Ruth. But he continued to write to her 'about the things that lovers write to one another.' He wrote a new letter every day - no mean achievement for a laggard correspondent like Seretse. Meanwhile, Tshekedi hived off to see his lawyer in Cape Town. He reappeared a week later bearing a long document, with typed copies of 21 letters appended. The document was headed: 'Presentation of the position arising in the political crisis occasioned by the marriage of Seretse Khama to Ruth Williams in England.
Case presented by Chief Tshekedi Khama of the Bamangwato people and their legal adviser Adv D.M. Buchanan, K.C.

Dropping off a copy on his way home with the Resident Commissioner in Mafikeng, Tshekedi had the document confirmed by 'two representative meetings of the headmen of the Tribe' at Serowe. Tshekedi then formally presented it as an official memorandum of the whole 'tribe' to the B.P. administration on December 15th. He then had numerous copies of the memorandum typed by his typists, which were distributed widely as a form of lobbying to interested parties at home and abroad.12

Seretse protested that the memorandum had been confirmed by secret meetings which excluded him. The document was invalid as an expression of Bangwato views until it had been confirmed by a full kgotla assembly. Seretse went on to suggest that Tshekedi was trying to oust him to grab the chieftainship for himself. Tshekedi responded: 'If that is his suspicion, he is welcome to it.' In turn, he accused Seretse of being manipulated against his regency by other royal 'uncles" old Serogola and young Peto Sekgoma. Seretse was indeed receiving intimations of increasing support from people - especially women - who were dissatisfied with Tshekedi's rule. '3

Discussions between Seretse and Tshekedi, conducted with some acrimony in front of the District Commissioner, resulted in an agreement to hold another kgotla assembly, just after Christmas, before Seretse was due to fly back to England to resume his legal studies.

The second kgotla assembly on the question of Seretse's marriage was convened on December 28th, 1948. Seretse appealed for 'the views of the people" rather than of his 'uncles'. But a procession of uncles and headmen proceeded to lecture Seretse once again. Seretse tried to make it clear that the real issue was his succession to bogosi (chieftainship), rather than his marriage.

Younger men then began to speak up in support of Seretse. The most ancient and respected 'uncle'. Phethu Mphoeng, spoke with foreboding of the racial arrogance that might be shown by Seretse's 'coloured' offspring: 'We cannot be ruled by a Chief who looks low on the people, a Chief who will probably call the black people kafirs'.

Seretse rebuked the old man for insolence and appealed for tolerance. At the end of the debate Tshekedi announced that more speakers had spoken against than for the marriage; and then proceeded to discount Seretse's supporters as 'without exception men of no standing in the Tribe; they are mostly young people ... this matter was beyond the understanding of young people.' 14

On the last day of 1948 Seretse left Serowe for England, promising to return after his final Bar exams in May. Tshekedi had the minutes of the second kgotla typed up, and forwarded them to the Resident Commissioner with the comment that they showed 'the tribe is still unanimous in its protest against this marriage.'" During the next six months Tshekedi brooded over the affair, largely to himself, though he periodically consulted with others. At the end of January he wrote a somewhat vindictive letter to the Resident Commissioner entitled 'Seretse's
character viewed from an administrative angle” particularly taking offence at the fact that Seretse had taken to drinking liquor.

By April Tsekedji was growing belligerent and talking of forcing Seretse to quit as chief. People noticed how he was touring cattle-posts, in order to separate ‘something over 2 000’ cattle belonging to Seretse from Sekgoma II’s will from the 30 000 cattle that Tsekedzi claimed under Khama’s 1907 will. Tsekedzi was also preparing the colonial authorities with alarmist talk of ‘the possibility of serious disturbance’ if Ruth were to be allowed into Bechuanaland - the obvious official pretext for a ban on her entry. The High Commissioner was not entirely convinced by Tsekedzi’s claim.16

Seretse arrived back in London on January 6th, 1949, after ten weeks apart from Ruth. The British press proved to be as intrusive as ever. But the couple succeeded in avoiding any press statements which would compromise negotiations. Seretse told the Commonwealth Relations Office that, the press had been putting leading *yes’ or ‘no’ type questions to his wife, and had then invented her replies in full.17

The couple moved into a larger flat, on the ground floor of No. 34 Adolphus Road, in the Manor House suburb of North London. They were sometimes seen enjoying a light ale in the Hornsey Wood Tavern. Seretse reverted to his law studies, though he did not pursue them with sufficient vigour to actually pass the Bar exams which he sat in mid-May. He continued to receive £60 per month voted him by the Bangwato treasury. He only agreed to return to Bechuanaland without Ruth on condition she received £40 a month after he left at the beginning of June.18

Resident Commissioner Sillery, who spent much of his time compiling dynastic histories of the various ‘tribes’ of the Protectorate, was encouraged by Tsekedji to see current events as a constitutional crisis. Sillery thought he had found the key to the dispute between Tsekedji and Seretse in old rivalries between dynastic houses. He saw Ruth as ‘a sort of Lady Jane Grey,’ being used to advance the cause of the House of Sekgoma - and ‘at the same time (forgive the mixed metaphor) the match that might set all this inflammable material alight!’ 19

High Commissioner Sir Evelyn Baring, on the other hand, was more concerned with avoiding possible civil disturbance, if Ruth proved to be ‘a rallying point for minority sentiment,’ by stopping Ruth from flying overseas with Seretse.

Colonial government fears were, if anything, further strengthened by a letter from one of Seretse Khama’s cousins, Capital Seretse of Orlando township (part of later Soweto) in Johannesburg. He attacked Tsekedji for high treason against ‘honourable Ruth Williams ... a European lady - a daughter of our gods.’20

Seretse arrived back in Serowe on June 15th, having been intercepted and delayed at Mafikeng by Tsekedji and the Protectorate administration. A district officer had had to be sent to Mochudi, in the Bakgatla Reserve south of the Bangwato, to nip in the bud local ideas of sending a Bakgatla regiment to ceremonially escort Seretse home.

The third great kgotla assembly on Seretse Khama’s marriage and succession was then held between Monday, June 20th and Saturday, June 25th, 1949. Estimates
of the crowd attending the assembly over these five days ranged from 3,500 (by Tshekedi and in the Afrikaans press) to 10,000. A later government enquiry was to confirm that the assembly was certainly representative of the Bangwato (male adult) citizenry as a whole, from outlying districts as well as from the capital.

Tshekedi was already disadvantaged among the Bangwato by a 'great secret' spread around by Serogola. This told how on his return from inspecting the Khama cattle-posts, Tshekedi had been challenged by Serogola over his claim to royal cattle as his personal property. Tshekedi had replied that all tributes and levies, including the matimela cattle ('waifs-and-strays') and the elephant tusks (one out of every two hunted) were his and not Seretse's. This remark was interpreted as a direct claim by Tshekedi to monarchy for himself and his successors, excluding Seretse.

The kgotla, with the world press in attendance, began with a display of colonial government impartiality that frightened Tshekedi. The Resident Commissioner's deputy, Vivien Ellenberger, who had the status of a Motswana elder after having spent nearly all his life in the country, selfconsciously addressed both Tshekedi and Seretse as 'kgosi'.

Seretse again made a virtue of the fact that he was supported by the mass

of the Bangwato. 'The talk of the first two days,' according to Ellenberger, 'was mostly of a skirmishing nature - beating about the bush - with an occasional crack of the whip which produced a quick and equally stinging reply.'

It was one of Seretse's Tshukudu relatives, Gaoletse, on the Tuesday morning, who first revealed the 'great secret' of Tshekedi's claim to the matimela cattle and the elephant tusks. But the mood of the meeting really broke late on Wednesday morning, when Serogola rose as a heavy-weight to confront Tshekedi. In the words of Ellenberger, 'Serogola Seretse came to the point with a telling speech which received considerable support from the tribesmen ... he ended his speech with these words: "... I say, let the woman come and their child shall succeed."' When he adjourned the meeting at lunchtime, Tshekedi welcomed the fact that plain speaking had now begun.21

The assembly reconvened on the Thursday morning. The mood of the meeting had now turned. Tshekedi 'made a long and impassioned but ineffective reply to Serogola' over sounds of discontent from the masses assembled. But Tshekedi must have shared with Ellenberger the notion that while Seretse would sway the majority of commoners, 'the "guts" of the tribe who are the big property owners & heads of large sections will stick to Tshekedi.' This was to lead Tshekedi into making the biggest tactical blunder of his life.

Tshekedi ended his long speech by calling on his principal supporters, all politically prominent men of proven administrative experience, to come out of the crowd and to stand before Ellenberger. 'The people you saw standing here' Tshekedi then told the crowd, 'are my successors if I should die.' The meeting then broke for a late morning tea-break.

While others refreshed themselves, Seretse remained in the kgotla by himself and conceived his master stroke. After the interval, he rose before the people almost
apologetically, beginning with, 'Bangwato, I have not much to say' - and then launched into a long speech. Ellenberger takes up the story:

He then took a leaf from Tshekedi’s book, calling up the leading men among his supporters. His next move was a complete surprise and its result shattered Tshekedi. Excluding royal headmen, he asked those who still opposed the coming of his wife to stand. Not more than 40 did so. He then called on those who now accepted his wife to stand.

This brought the whole assembly to its feet - 4 000 men shouting 'Pula, Pula, Pula!' It was a stirring spectacle, a magnificent expression of public sentiment.22

By this act Seretse had been acclaimed as kgosi together with his wife by a popular assembly. Press reports suggest the shouting and stamping had lasted for ten minutes, clouds of brown dust rising into the sky. Seretse himself 'grinned and slapped his thigh.' Tshekedi adjourned the meeting and stalked off. 23

Saturday morning saw Tshekedi's reluctant acceptance of the fact that Seretse had been acclaimed as kgosi by the people on Thursday. 'The duty of a Chief; Tshekedi told Seretse, 'is to bear all insults. My first law would be: listen to your people.'

After some harsh, defiant words of admonishment, Tshekedi ended the historic kgotla assembly with a dramatic, but not unanticipated, announcement that he would exile himself from the Bangwato if Ruth Williams came to the country.

The British colonial authorities had still to endorse the acclamation of Seretse as kgosi, before he could formally succeed. The initial inclination in Mafikeng was to do so. Ellenberger's report on the Third Kgotla portrayed Seretse as a rebellious young adult, angry at attempts to treat him like a small boy, who had revived the 'age-old bitterness, suspicion and intrigue' of dynastic disputes. But, as Ellenberger told the press on July 4th, all that remained before the installation of the new chief was formal acceptance of the Bangwato decision by the British government in London.

The new Serowe District Commissioner Richard Sullivan, himself the heir to an English baronetcy, was strongly in favour of the least possible delay in implementing Seretse's rightful hereditary succession. Sillery, as Resident Commissioner, writing to the High Commissioner in Pretoria on July 5th, formally recommended 'that Seretse Khama be recognised by you as chief of the Bamangwato and that the Secretary of State's confirmation be sought.'25

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The press combined support for Seretse with sympathy for Tshekedi. The qualities of the protagonists and the drama of the debate, in the exotic setting of
an African traditional town, caught the public imagination in Britain and elsewhere. The obvious parallel, noted by periodicals as divergent as the Manchester Guardian and Time magazine, was with Britain's own royal marriage and succession crisis of 1936, when Edward VIII had been forced to abdicate after his unapproved marriage to Mrs Simpson, a foreign commoner and double divorcée. There was also a long-running royal crisis in Belgium, where King Leopold I's desire to marry a commoner was only resolved by his abdication in 1951.

But the main political reason for press focus on the Bangwato succession crisis in Bechuanaland was undoubtedly its pertinence to next-door South Africa, where the ultra-chauvinist National Party government of Dr Malan had been elected to power on the political platform of raceseparation in 1948. At the time of the Third Kgotla, Malan's government had just begun its programme of apartheid legislation with a sensational bill to ban 'mixed marriages'. which was passed on its third parliamentary reading on the day after the Bangwato acclaimed Seretse. In fact the new law would ban marriages between Europeans and Coloureds or Asians. Marriages between Europeans and Africans, such as Ruth and Seretse, had been illegal ever since 1923.

The acclamation by the Bangwato of Seretse'schieftainship and marriage struck at the heart of white racism in southern Africa. It challenged the whole philosophical basis of apartheid: that not only was segregation 'natural' but it was actually desired by the native masses themselves. Insult would have been added to injury by British recognition of Seretse as chief.

While Seretse made arrangements for accommodating his wife at Serowe, Tshekedi made preparations for self-exile. These included plans to strip the Kama inheritance out of the Bangwato reserve - both cattle and the moveable parts of buildings. Tshekedi also hogged the press limelight, while Seretse assiduously followed official advice by refusing all interviews with the press. Tribal government was effectively frozen at Serowe, deprived of its senior personnel, though things were generally quiet and 'educated Bechuanaland natives' expected the whole affair to soon blow over.

More foreign journalists arrived in the town to cover Ruth Khama's arrival. They discovered a world entirely unlike the lion-infested village of mudhuts they had been led to expect. The London Daily Express correspondent expressed his surprise that, though life in Serowe was slow, the people were not only 'intelligent and animated' but also, unlike elsewhere in southern Africa, 'entirely free from subservience' to Europeans.

Letters of support for Seretse began to arrive from Bangwato migrant workers in Cape Town, Kimberley and Johannesburg. There were also jokers at work. A cypher telegram from Llandudno, Wales, to the Serowe District Commissioner, apparently about Ruth's arrival, proved to be a hoax: 'Typewriter Schenectady Machine-Gun Peashooter.'
Meanwhile in London, an old Bechuanaland administrative hand on overseas leave, Gerald Nettelton, was bowled over on meeting Ruth. He reported back to Ellenberger that, though he diagnosed an undisciplined and intolerant streak in her: 'Ruth Khama is a nice looking girl, much nicer looking than she appears to be from her photographs - pretty golden hair ... She was nicely and simply dressed, and conversed freely and intelligently. In fact, she is a tougher proposition than we had hoped she might be and she will never be bought off."29 Seretse was summoned to the High Commissioner's office in Pretoria, where he met Sir Evelyn Baring on Monday, July 4th. The meeting was cordial and friendly, with every impression given that recognition of his chieftainship was imminent. A headline in that afternoon's Johannesburg Star newspaper read 'Tribe's Acceptance of Seretse Thought to be Final'. Seretse subsequently told Ruth to be ready to fly out within three weeks.

Tshekedi remained behind at Serowe, consulting with Buchanan and Bathoen and his main followers. On Thursday, July 7th, Tshekedi and Bathoen appeared in Pretoria and handed Baring a public document dated one day previously, signed by himself and 43 headmen. The declaration began: 'We are leaving the Bamangwato country to ally ourselves to a neighbouring chief...’ That chief was Kgosi Kgari Sechele of the Bakwena, who was to allot them a place on his border with the Bangwato at Rametsana. Thenceforward Tshekedi's party was to be known as 'Boo-Rametsana' or simply as 'Rametsana'. Tshekedi and Bathoen had made it clear to Baring that 'there is no question of disputing Seretse's appointment as chief.' But, at a second meeting with Baring on July 8th, they convinced him of the need for a judicial enquiry to look into the validity of Seretse's acclamation in kgotla.30 Sullivan, the Serowe District Commissioner, was under orders to gain Seretse's confidence, and to assure him that Baring was pressing London for early confirmation of his appointment. Sullivan reported Seretse to be 'nervous and insecure' on July 13th. Seretse saw that Tshekedi was using the issue of the Khama inheritance as a diversion, to stay inside the Bangwato reserve with 'his' property as long as possible. But on July 15th, Sullivan found Seretse more confident. Seretse wanted a government veterinary permit to sell cattle so that he could buy a car with the proceeds. (He had an American car in mind; British cars were known to be totally unsuitable for dirt roads.) Meanwhile in Mafikeng, as late as July 22nd, Sillery was badgering his superiors for confirmation of Seretse as chief of the Bangwato.3' People in Serowe learned about British government pronouncements and activities from the radio - Southern Rhodesian, South African, or British (BBC Overseas Service) being the order of clarity of reception. But Seretse was never to know what happened behind closed doors in London and Pretoria during this period.

The South African government had apparently made moves to ban Ruth Khama from its territory even before Seretse was acclaimed in the Serowe kgotla.32 Both Afrikaans and Natal English-language newspapers in South Africa were particularly hostile to the marriage and to recognition of Seretse. Representatives
of the three Dutch Reformed Churches of South Africa, about to convene in
general assembly in Johannesburg 'to discuss social evils' went to Prime Minister
Malan in person on June 24th, to 'make most forceful representations' for the
Union government to stop recognition of Seretse as paramount chief of the
Bangwato.

The South African Bureau of Racial Affairs, a government 'think-tank', issued a
statement on June 29th: that South Africa could not *stand by indifferently and
watch proceedings of this nature' on its borders.33

As a result of these pressures, Dr Malan consulted his cabinet colleagues and his
private secretary D.D. Forsyth, who was also (permanent) secretary for external
affairs. Forsyth decided to be extra cautious in contacting the British government,
as strictly speaking Bechuanaland Protectorate affairs were none of the Union's
business.34

The South African High Commissioner (i.e. ambassador) in London, Leif
Egeland, met Britain's Commonwealth Relations minister, Philip NoelBaker, on
the morning of Thursday, June 30th, for what Noel-Baker later minute as 'only
semi-official or private representations.' Egeland asked for recognition of Seretse
to be withheld on three grounds: the repugnance of the marriage to 'all races' in
the Union of South Africa; the desirability of keeping such a competent leader as
Tshekedi in power; and the prospect of the white woman soon abandoning the
marriage. 'Mr. Egeland said he would wager a large sum of money that she would
not last six months.'35

After Baring saw Tshekedi and Bathoen on July 7th, he got wind of public
comments made by Godfrey Huggins, Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia.
Huggins also wrote to Baring, a former governor of Southern Rhodesia, on July
7th about his being 'bombarded' to interfere in Seretse's succession. British
government recognition of Seretse as chief, he claimed, would 'add a little fuel to
the flames of the fire kept burning by ... anti-Native Europeans.' Later that day
Huggins was challenged in his parliament to deplore such racial miscegenation;
he agreed that the Bangwato had shown 'disastrous ... lack of racial pride'.
Huggins then wrote another personal letter to Baring. Meanwhile similar
sentiments had also been expressed in the white parliament of Northern
Rhodesia.36

At this juncture, between the 7th and 1th of June, Baring’s resolve to recognize
Seretse faltered. He had taken confidential advice from different quarters. The
chief secretary in charge of the High Commission Territories within Baring’s
office, W.A.W. (Arthur) Clark, was appalled at losing tribal administrators of the
calibre of his good friend Tshekedi and the 43 headmen. Clark, quiet and smooth,
has been described as Baring’s Rasputin. Baring

also had on his office staff ‘a man named Cairns, a reputedly rich young South
African, on whom [remarks Sillery] Baring relied more than I liked for advice on
white South African opinion.'37

Baring’s personal priest-confessor was no Rasputin but Father Trevor Huddleston.
Huddleston has since recalled, with some shame, having advised Baring against
recognition of Seretse as Chief, on the grounds that recognition might make
irresistible South Africa's claim to incorporate the High Commission Territories. But it was undoubtedly the secret advice of D.D. Forsyth, Malan's private secretary, which tipped the scales so heavily against recognition of Seretse. D.D. Forsyth was an imperial mole burrowed in at the top of the nationalist mountain of white South Africa. He had been prime minister's secretary and secretary for external affairs since 1941, during all the heady years of the Union's war for King and Commonwealth under Smuts's leadership. Malan inherited Forsyth from Smuts in 1948 and kept him on, apparently in full knowledge of his continuing sympathies and loyalties - though Malan may not have realized the extent to which Forsyth was supplying the British with intelligence.

Baring and Forsyth, already close to each other, first met to discuss the Seretse affair on July 7th - between Baring's two meetings with Tshekedi and Bathoen. Forsyth reported on Malan's views. Malan claimed that the 'extremist Afrikaner' faction led by Strijdom in the South African cabinet was hoping that Britain would recognize Seretse. In that case the South African government would have a pretext for breaking with the British Commonwealth and declaring South Africa an independent republic.

On July 11th, Baring forwarded Ellenberger's report on the Third Kgotla to London, with the recommendation of a judicial enquiry to delay or invalidate Seretse's accession. He also wrote an urgent personal letter to Noel-Baker underlining the strength of Forsyth's views. In doing so Baring explicitly abandoned the principle he had adopted five years before, that British policy towards Africans in the High Commission Territories should never be behoven to the prejudices of white South Africa.

Receipt of Baring's telegraphic dispatches in London coincided with the arrival of Malan's special envoy, General Beyers, at the Commonwealth Relations Office. Beyers and Sir Percival Liesching, the permanent secretary, shared racist views about the undesirability of 'their son or daughter marrying a member of the negro race.' Patrick Gordon Walker, the new assistant minister and extremely ambitious politician, topped all with his incredibly racist suggestion that Seretse could be barred by an administrative fiat 'declaring that a chief cannot have a white wife.' Noel-Baker seems to have favoured inviting Seretse to London, to put him into the picture of 'the difficulties faced by the United Kingdom Government' in relation to the Union of South Africa, and to offer him an 'annual allowance' in return for abdication. But Noel-Baker was persuaded by Creech Jones the colonial minister, and by his British cabinet colleagues on July 21st, to go for a judicial enquiry and to publicly deny that South Africa had had any influence on British policy. The escalation of rhetoric was such that the British cabinet was told that South Africa might resort to 'armed incursion' into Bechuanaland 'if Seretse were to be recognised forthwith.'

Why was Britain so craven towards the Union of South Africa at this time? Historians point to Britain's continuing post-war economic crisis and to the Labour government's obsession with defence against the threat of international communism. South African gold, valued in U.S. dollars but sold exclusively through the Bank of England, was essential to the solution to Britain's dollar crisis.
shortage - the repayment of all the wartime loans which had effectively bankrupted Britain by 1942-43. The Cape sea route was seen as increasingly essential in naval strategy, as an alternative safe passage to the Suez Canal. There was also in 1949 - as Michael Dutfield has pointed out in a recent book - the new factor of South Africa's supply of uranium to Britain for atomic power. Uranium was potentially a contribution to both Britain's economy and defence capacity, as well as a bargaining counter for Britain with the U.S.A.

Britain's dependence on the Union was made all the more desperate after 1948 by the new government of the National Party in South Africa. National Party supporters threatened not only to break the Commonwealth link but also to nationalize British capital holdings, such as gold mines, in South Africa. Within South Africa, Britain's main agenda was to get Smuts and the United Party back into power. Recognition of Seretse, it was argued, would create the white backlash that would keep Smuts and the United Party out of office. This may well have been Forsyth's implicit thesis with Baring on July 7th, 1949. It was certainly to be Smuts's explicit thesis with Baring on March 20th, 1950, in an interview that was 'almost word for word what Douglas Forsyth had said eight months earlier.' Support for South Africa's United Party was to remain the hidden agenda of British policy towards Seretse Khama, until that party's disastrous defeat in the white South African elections of August 1954.

In the middle of August 1949, Ruth Khama flew out from Britain to Bechuanaland, by BOAC flying-boat to the Victoria Falls and then by a small hire-plane to Francistown. Seretse, in his new apple-green Chevrolet car, met her at Francistown and drove her south into the Bangwato Reserve. He had arranged to be temporarily accommodated with Minnie Shaw ('MmaShaw'), a sympathetic English-born trader's wife and temperance leader in the railway village of Palapye (Palapye Road).

Palapye was full of the world's press, staying at the (whites-only) railway station hotel, with the only bar serving alcoholic drinks in reach of Serowe. Ruth and Seretse were dogged by pressmen and presswomen at every step. They were chased by press cars from Palapye to Serowe in their apple-green car, trailing plumes of red dust along the road and high into the sky. Seretse was at the wheel and delighted in haring off the main dirt road onto side tracks, in order to get the pursuing cars bogged down in the thick sand. The couple were laughing at their jaunt, but kept resolutely silent when the press approached them in Serowe. For the first few days in Serowe, Seretse and Ruth stayed uneasily with Rev Seager, the L.M.S. missionary, and his family. Ruth Khama and Alan Seager did not get on well together. The couple then managed to move to a distinctive new settler-style house in Serowe on August 29th. The house had been built at Bangwato expense to accommodate one of the foreign experts, an agricultural officer, recruited to the Tribal Administration by Tshekedi. Tshekedi himself made sure that he had effectively moved out of Serowe for exile by the time that Ruth arrived. He and his followers had their possessions piled into three new red lorries. The lorries, bought specially for the purpose, became an ominous symbol of Boo-Rametsana among ordinary Bangwato. People
referred to them simply by their colour, as kgaphamadi meaning 'blood-red'.
Police reports show that popular imagination was running riot, with a baseless 'great fear' of night-time violence in town by kgaphamadi thugs lurking in the hedgerows.44
The colonial administration's decision to hold a judicial enquiry was announced on July 30th, followed by a long period of 'masterly inactivity' by the administration in hope of Ruth's revulsion for life in Bechuanaland. Tshekedi remained 'titular regent ... shorn of power.' He and Seretse could not agree on who should be interim acting chief. The Bangwato were disturbed by Tshekedi removing large herds of cattle from their country, but Serowe was reported 'quiet and deserted soon after nine o'clock at night.' Tribal administration slowly wound down, with all kgotla court cases frozen, except serious assaults and cattle thefts which went to the District Commissioner's court.45
Meanwhile, in London, the Commonwealth Relations Office (C.R.O.) cast around for evidence of black and white liberal opposition to the marriage in Africa, in the belief that this would turn liberal opinion in Britain to swing back behind Tshekedi. They found strong support for Tshekedi from his friends in South Africa - notably Dr A.B. Xuma the president of the African National Congress of South Africa, R.V. Selope Thema the most prominent African newspaper editor, and Paramount Chief Sobhuza II of Swaziland, as well as the respectable white liberals who were Tshekedi's fellow members of the South African Institute of Race Relations.

From Nigeria, the C.R.O. made great play of a word-of-mouth report about two Basotho delegates chatting in the interval of an agricultural conference. They were overheard disparaging the marriage. This report was transformed, by a process of Chinese whispers and wishful thinking, into hard evidence of widespread opposition to Seretse in Africa.
The enquiry's terms of reference were finally announced on September 15th. Much to the disappointment of Gordon Walker, the terms had to be limited within existing legislation on chiefly succession in the protectorate - testing Seretse's suitability as 'a fit and proper person' to be chief, and the legality of his popular acclamation in kgotla. Great care had been taken to avoid 'any suggestion that our attitude is in any way determined by purely racial considerations.' Tshekedi was to discover to his annoyance that the terms of the enquiry cited him as plaintiff against Seretse as defendant a convention in confrontational Western law which cast him clearly in the role of aggressor and pretender to the throne.46
The judicial enquiry was convened in a large tent erected in Serowe in the extreme heat of November 1st. Its chairman was the amiable Sir Walter 'Pop' Harragin, chief justice for the High Commission Territories. Harragin's impartiality was questionable on the grounds that he sometimes acted as Baring's administrative deputy. There was also the suspicion, carried over from his days as chief justice on the Gold Coast, 'that in any case which involved politics, he would oblige the political administration ... If the permanent civil service (apparently ministers don't count) want to remove Seretse Khama then Harrigin
[sic] will play ball for sure and I think that the Tory head officials will so instruct Harrigin.'47

The other two members of the judicial commission were Nettelton and an appointee of the Colonial Office in London, R.S. Hudson. Nettelton was appointed despite doubts over his bias in favour of the Bangwato popular viewpoint, not 'fully realising' the wider political context. Hudson was an expert in customary law with wide experience of Northern Rhodesia, who had a healthy scepticism about chiefly succession: 'I think it will be found that historically the man who is strongest and who can gain the greatest following, will be the paramount chief as long as he belongs to the chief's family.'48

The Harragin Enquiry collected ten volumes of evidence and a further three files full of submissions, before completing their report on December 1st. Much of the commission's time was taken up with Tshekedi, who insisted on them adjourning from Serowe to Lobatse, in the far south of the protectorate, so he could talk freely. The commission was 'far more impressed' by Seretse's clear and concise contribution.

Seretse came alive under the cross-examination of the attorney-general, with characteristics which were to serve him well in later years of statecraft. He took points and argued persuasively and even humorously on his feet.

like a born trial lawyer. The Johannesburg Star reported him looking the commissioners full in the face, and saying: 'I claim the chieftainship because it is due to me, and the tribe wants me. My morals are as good as any chief or regent in Bechuanaland Protectorate. My educational qualifications are probably better ..49

Seretse's prestige was undeniably enhanced by his behaviour in front of the commission. His people were happy to recognize the attributes of a kgosi in action; the commissioners found themselves admiring *a typical African in build and features* who was able to express himself like an educated English gentleman.

By the end of November Tshekedi was complaining:

Seretse has been told that he has no powers of a Chief, but in practice he is in control of the Tribe; he calls meetings, summons people from outside districts to Serowe, raises collections, calls out regiments, gives Letsema [i.e. royal permission to plough and sow], etc ... nothing short of installing Seretse, giving him Kham'a's cattle, driving Tshekedi away but forcing all the people with him to return to Serowe, will satisfy Serowe Bamangwato today.'50

Sillery's interim solution, while everyone awaited the outcome of the Harragin commission, was announced on December 16th - without any prior consulation of the Bangwato - that the District Commissioner would replace Tshekedi as the 'native authority' of the Bangwato. (Sillery followed the precedent of administrative regulations in Tanganyika, where he had previously been a district officer for 17 years.) Tshekedi, however, refused to resign formally.

Seretse and the Bangwato now obtained the services of lawyer P.A. Fraenkel of Mafikeng to counter Tshekedi and Buchanan. The latter seem to have temporarily lost their reason or good sense at this time, uttering modish but fantastical claims
of 'communist' plots and conspiracies behind Seretse. The 'communist' in question was apparently Walter Pela, the old ex-policeman boarding master at Tiger Kloof, who was coordinating support for Seretse among young Bangwato in Johannesburg.51

Seretse and Ruth had a long wait at Serowe before they saw any action on the part of the British authorities. With Tshekedi out of Serowe, Seretse was given all the respect if not all the responsibilities of an effective ruling kgosi of the Bangwato, with his wife as mohumagadi (queen). They lived on the edge of Serowe in their six-room house, with electric light and other modern conveniences such as a refrigerator and a short-wave radio. Five retainers or relatives acted as household servants. They socialized with friends and relatives around the town, driving in their large green American car. Ruth tried to improve her command of the Setswana language. They rode horses, and they played ping-pong together on the stoep or verandah. (Table tennis was to remain a favourite game for Seretse and his family, who always had a ping-pong table in the house.)

Lady Khama today recalls Seretse's playfulness in this period after their marriage. He might shout, 'Look under that table!' After she had stooped down and found nothing, he would burst into cheerful laughter saying that the dogs had taken it away. 'These few months, Seretse was to recall, 'were the happiest we had known.'52 Ruth Khama was also pregnant with their first child.

The resolve of Seretse and Ruth to have nothing to do with the press began to weaken in this period. The famous American photo-journalist Margaret Bourke-White, working for Time-Life, persuaded them to sit for photographs. She said it was more difficult than getting a photo opportunity with Joe Stalin. Her two photo-features on Seretse and Ruth in Life magazine took the love story to an enormous new audience in America, where the press had previously been fairly uninterested.

It was also at this time that Noel Monks, the hardbitten Australian who was the roving correspondent of the London Daily Mail, took Seretse into the Palapye station hotel bar to flout its whites-only rule. This made Nicholas Montserrat, the High Commissioner's press minder, apoplectic. But Noel Monks was to claim that among local whites - officials and their wives excepted - 'there's a wave of sympathy for Ruth and Seretse that no Government decree can kill.' Another troublesome journalist for Montserrat was Julian Redfern of the London Daily Express.

After writing The Cruel Sea about his war experiences, Montserrat was to satirize these journalists in his lengthy novel The Tribe that Lost its Head, his favourite best-seller. It transformed the Seretse story into steamy jungle 'tribal' mumbo-jumbo with bizarre sex.3

The Harragin Report, a relatively brief and sober document, was dispatched secretly to London on December 6th. It concluded that, while the June 1949 Kgotla had been properly convened and conducted, Seretse Khama 'is not a fit and proper person to discharge the functions of Chief.' But the reasons given were
entirely circumstantial, and not at all related to the question of Seretse's character. On the contrary, the commission recommended recognition of Seretse 'should conditions change as they well might in a variety of ways.' The unstated condition was, as the C.R.O. was to note, that Seretse and Ruth might divorce sometime. The conditions under which Seretse could not be recognized were stated as follows. First, that Seretse could not be an effective chief while he was a prohibited immigrant to South Africa, as that precluded him from visiting the B.P. administrative headquarters at Mafikeng located inside South Africa. Second, that 'friendly and cooperative' relations were needed with both South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, who objected to Seretse's recognition. And, third, that recognition of Seretse would 'undoubtedly cause disruption in the Bamangwato Tribe.' Only the third point fell inside the terms of reference of the judicial enquiry, but it was not elaborated upon in the body of the report. As to the other two points, they had been widely anticipated in the press and elsewhere - British government denials to the contrary. In the prescient words of a protest petition of Bangwato headmen in support of Seretse, dated November 7th, 1949: We suspect that we and our interests and wishes may be sacrificed by the British Government since we are a small and helpless community, in order that more powerful neighbouring territories, thus appeased [sic], may be retained within the British Commonwealth.'

The Harragin Report caused panic in Baring's office at Pretoria and in the C.R.O. and Colonial Office in London, because it gave the 'right' conclusion for the 'wrong' reasons. One C.R.O. official, a former India Office man rather than Dominions Office man, J.P. Gibson, remarked that the Harragin Report had found 'Seretse to be a very fit and proper person to be Chief if it were not for his wife.' Gibson's own reading of the report suggested greater disruption among the Bangwato if Seretse were not recognized than if he were! Creech Jones and Andrew Cohen of the Colonial Office called the report's reasoning 'monstrous' and 'maladroit.'

Baring was flown over to Britain for an urgent series of meetings to discuss strategy. Extra reasons for banning Seretse had to be hastily concocted: African and white liberal opposition in Africa; the inability of the Bangwato as 'primitive and unlearned people' to make up their own minds; Seretse's 'gross irresponsibility' in marrying without prior permission; the present ungovernability of the Bangwato pointing to the need to 'evolve a more acceptable and representative system of government' (including non-Ngwato 'allied peoples') than chieftainship; and, finally, the unsuitability of Ruth Khama to be a traditional 'queen' and of her children to be Seretse's successors.

Hudson of the Colonial Office objected strongly to all of these extra arguments, refuting them one by one. Two prominent men, Xuma and Selope Thema, did not constitute the whole of African opinion in South Africa. The Bangwato were by no means 'primitive and unlearned compared to other tribes in this part of Africa. Rather the reverse.' The reason for not recognizing Seretse was quite simply its 'effect on neighbouring states.' Even
Clement Attlee, the prime minister, asserted: 'It is as if we had been obliged to agree to Edward VIII's abdication so as not to annoy the Irish Free State and the U.S.A.'

When the British cabinet met at No. 10 Downing Street on January 31st, 1950, it was preoccupied with an imminent general election. The Cabinet was easily bamboozled by the disarming presentation of the C.R.O.'s case by Noel-Baker. It was decided to invite Seretse Khama and his wife to London for talks on their future, and to try to obtain his voluntary abdication. The Harragin Report could not be published; a White Paper setting out the government's views would be published instead. The British cabinet thereby became party, though unwittingly, to a conspiracy hatched in Baring's office in South Africa six weeks earlier. 'The plot to get Seretse quietly out of the country,' recalls Sillery in his unpublished memoirs, 'was hatched in Pretoria, in the High Commissioner's office, I think by Clark.' The evidence in Commonwealth Relations Office files suggests that the conspirators were W.A.W. Clark and Harragin in Pretoria, and Liesching and Gordon Walker in London - linked by Baring who flew from the two in Pretoria to meet the two in London. No one else in London needed to know anything about the plot until the last moment, when the C.R.O. had to make frantic preparations for the Cabinet meeting in the last week of January 1950. Noel-Baker was conveniently out of the country, at a conference in Ceylon, during those preparations. The Seretse Khama case came to be regarded by Attlee as Gordon Walker's task, a test maybe for higher office, replacing Noel-Baker.

On the surface the plot was merely following Noel-Baker's July 1949 suggestion, which had been turned down in favour of the Harragin enquiry, of calling Seretse to London for talks. But the essence of the plot was deception: first to get Seretse to fly to London in the expectation of open consultation, and then to prevent him from returning home. The only time the plot was explicitly committed to paper was when Baring flew from South Africa to London in December 1949. Clark wrote a 'Note on Bamangwato Affairs', enclosed in a secret and personal dispatch to Liesching dated December 10th. This which was probably carried to London by Baring in person. Clark argued that both Seretse and Tshekedi had to be kept outside the Bangwato Reserve: 'The present situation can only be met ... by direct administration.' But Seretse had to be kept sweet for a possible future return as chief when his marriage broke up. In return for giving up his chieftainship, he ought to be pressed with 'a generous offer of sufficient funds' to help him finish his law studies, and then offered a 'post in another part of the Colonial Empire' to stop him being 'disgruntled and therefore good material for communist propaganda.' Seretse, Clark argued, could only be induced to make this voluntary renunciation in the calm atmosphere of London, where the C.R.O. could work' on him. If he then tried to return to the B.P., except to deal with his legal dispute with Tshekedi over Khara's will in the high court at Lobatse, he could be kept out of the territory under the terms of Proclamation No.15 of 1907. Such a
ploy would avoid the violent reactions that might result from announcing the government's decision while Seretse was still in the country, and save the B.P. from having to expel him from the territory.59

The plot was put into operation after the British cabinet meeting, despite a leak in the press on February 4th that the government had decided not to recognize Seretse. Baring flew back to South Africa. Sillery, 'rather exercised by conflicting press reports' was summoned to meet Baring at Johannesburg airport to be gulled into doing the deed.

Baring carried with him a ciphered telegram that told Sillery: 'Cabinet have not, repeat not, yet reached definite decision to withhold recognition in the event of [Seretse's] refusal' But it added an evasive proviso: 'If Seretse raises any question about passage back, or the cost of passage, Sillery should say that he will not be out of pocket over the journey.' This aroused Sillery's suspicion. Baring decided to spill the beans to Sillery in the presence of Cairns from his Pretoria office staff. Sillery recalls:

I objected ... but Cairns (Cairns again!) chipped in ... [which] seemed to clinch it with the rest of them and I was instructed to convey the Secretary of State's invitation to Ruth and Seretse. This I did without embellishment.60

Sillery invited Seretse and Ruth to Mafikeng, to offer them the poison chalice. They came eagerly by car, completing the arduous round-trip on dirt roads from Serowe within the day.

The British cabinet, Sillery told them, was asking them to fly post-haste for urgent consultations, because it had not yet - press reports notwithstanding - made up its mind about action on the Harragin Report. Sillery reported telegraphically that Seretse 'agreed with no hesitation to proceed to London on aeroplane leaving Victoria Falls on February 10th. Ruth was a little cagey but made no demur.'6' Ruth Khama had smelt a rat, suspecting that if she went to Britain she would not be allowed to return to Bechuanaland. Seretse for his part refused to believe a British prime minister and his cabinet could possibly be so deceitful.

In kgotla the next day, 'discussion was heated.' Some said Ruth should stay behind. Sillery then arrived in Serowe and gave the couple lunch at the District Commissioner's house. Ruth was talkative. Seretse, according to Sillery, seemed 'engrossed in own thoughts [and] had poor appetite and showed curiosity about return journey. We parried his questions.'

Sillery claims that he parried Seretse's questions about his return by sticking to the prearranged formula that he 'would not be out of pocket' on his air-ticket. But Seretse and the Bangwato, and their lawyer Fraenkel and the international press corps at Serowe, were undoubtedly given the impression that Seretse would be given a ticket to return home after about three weeks.

Seretse was all keyed up to go to London and have it out with the C.R.O. in person. Ruth, it was agreed, should stay behind. She was expecting a child, and the couple were determined that an heir to the Kha ma line should be born in Khama's country.
Seretse left Serowe alone on February 10th, 1950, with a letter to Noel Baker from the Bangwato, signed by Serogola Seretse and Obeditse Ratshosa as their representatives.

In their letter the Bangwato said they were pleased that their kgosi had been called to London for consultation. It was proof that the mutual relationship of trust, on which the protectorate between the British and the Batswana was founded, still lived. The kgosi's wife could not come, however, as there was no guarantee in writing that she would be allowed to return. The Bangwato also expressed 'the traditional fear we have long had' of the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia:

Throughout our history both these countries seem to have sought to dispossess us of our land and our rights, and it was on account of this very apprehension that we originally sought the protection of Great Britain. We submit that our apprehension at present is not unfounded, that our neighbours may endeavour to interfere in our domestic affairs, though we as a free people deny that they have any right to try even to influence the eventual decision which rests solely with ourselves and your Government.62

The story of royal love and political intrigue in two continents made good copy for the international press. It brought unusual people and places onto a world stage. Listeners recall BBC radio announcers spluttering over the words 'Bamang-wa-to' and 'k-g-ootla', and the latter word itself entered one thesaurus of the English language by 1952.63

Despite denials, it was obvious to all concerned that it was white objections in South Africa and perhaps Rhodesia that had motivated the British government to persecute Seretse Khama. The story of Ruth and Seretse, which broke into world consciousness in 1949, thus brought South Africa as well as Bechuanaland into the world spotlight. South Africa was seen as a country bucking the trend of modernity towards a more open and humane society. Unlike other countries it had not been changed for the better by the Second World War, but was seen as going backwards in history.

Chapter 5
BANISHMENT
1950-52

Seretse's BOAC Sunderland flying-boat landed on Southampton water on Tuesday, February 14th, 1950, and Seretse was driven to London by his friend John Keith of the Colonial Office. Keith later reported to the C.R.O.: 'Seretse was in a very firm mood, and had a shrewd appreciation of the issues at stake ... he was not going to give in here and now; it was not a personal matter and he would have to go back and consult his tribe.' Liesching met Seretse on his arrival at the C.R.O. in Keith's car; and found him 'relaxed and cheerful' but non-committal. The C.R.O. put Seretse into accommodation at Airways Mansions, on Charles II Street in the Haymarket area - a short walk from government offices in Whitehall.

Seretse faced the combined forces of the C.R.O. - two ministers and two permanent officials - on February 16th. He had briefed himself well. His official
legal adviser, the ancient and bumbling Lord Rathcreedan, was silent and ineffective by his side. Why had Ruth not come, asked the ministers. Because the Bangwato suspected there was a 'trick on the part of the United Kingdom Government' afoot to get and keep her out of the country, Seretse replied. She had never been invited to take part in consultations before.

After a long and tortuous prologue about the dangers of the 'tribe' disintegrating, Noel-Baker asked Seretse to voluntarily relinquish his chieftainship, for the consideration of £800 (£1 100 before tax) per annum. Seretse later recalled:

I was stunned speechless. His calm unemotional manner was as unfeeling as if he were asking me to give up smoking.

Seretse's characteristically humorous throw-away reply had a sting in its tail. Would he still be free to engage in politics - say, in 'communist activities'? Given the anti-communism of the Cold War, Seretse had touched on a raw nerve. The laughter was loud, perhaps too loud. Noel-Baker thought it was a good joke. But perhaps Seretse would prefer to engage in looking after overseas students, as Keith's assistant in the Colonial Office's student welfare section.

Seretse then warmed to the attack with his suggestion that the British government 'thought it better to annoy the tribe than to annoy Mr Malan.' Noel-Baker replied, in 'strict confidence' that 'the U.K. differed greatly on certain things' from the Union and Rhodesian governments. But 'race relations in southern Africa were explosive and must be thought about with great care.'

Responding to Noel-Baker's contention that his chieftainship would lead to disruption, Seretse said direct rule of the Bangwato by the British could only 'lead to disrespect and trouble' Noel-Baker replied that it would promote 'an even more democratic form of government.'

This played right into Seretse's hands. He could not agree to surrender the chieftainship without the (democratic) right of consulting his people convened in kgotla. They might otherwise think he was 'selling out' for money. Would it not be better, Seretse asked, for him to be tried out as chief for a probationary period? Could he see a copy of the Harragin Report? The answer to both questions was 'No.'

The next day Seretse underlined these points in an exposition case which greatly impressed John Keith. He was not going to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, but must consult his people first. Why couldn't the C.R.O. show him the Harragin Report? He could only deduce that it revealed the strength of Bangwato support for himself, and the British fear of white South African opinion. 'Seretse is a gentleman,' observed Keith, 'and has a lot of moral courage.' Keith, like Sillery, was aware of being morally compromised, and of being much less than a gentleman himself in having to keep the full picture secret from Seretse.

On receiving Keith's report, Noel-Baker flirted with the idea of letting Seretse into his confidence by 'frank discussion of race relations in the Union.' But then he thought better of it. It was hard enough, as Baring remarked, for 'a Socialist' like
Noel-Baker to admit to himself, let alone to other people, 'that his motive in sitting on Seretse was unwillingness to offend South Africa.'

Noel-Baker was extremely relieved when Seretse gave him a pretext to delay further negotiations until after the general election when, due to ill health, Noel-Baker would no longer be Commonwealth Relations minister. Seretse had been so disquieted by Rathcreedan's lack of performance that he wanted his Mafikeng lawyer Fraenkel to fly over and assist him. The C.R.O. agreed, but Fraenkel had been delayed by the two week validation period needed after a yellow-fever injection.

Seretse sat in Airways Mansions, restrained from unburdening himself to any living soul. Cut off from Ruth and the Bangwato, he was never more lonely in his life than during that fortnight in the centre of London's West End at the time of the general election. He could not mix with his student friends, and probably did not eat regularly. He could only drink in his room or, while trying to avoid press recognition and public conversation, in the bars around Piccadilly Circus.

When Keith contacted Seretse at the end of February he found he was 'in very depressed frame of mind and is much worried ... very homesick, [and] feels he cannot be absent much longer from his wife.' This resulted in a worried C.R.O. minute: 'We cannot detain Seretse here [yet] by any legal means.' The British government's need for decisive action over Seretse grew ever more urgent. The C.R.O. busied itself with preparations during the period of the general election.-- which was to result in a re-elected Labour government with a reduced majority. Percival Liesching, permanent secretary of the C.R.O., proposed a five year suspension of recognition of Seretse as chief, during which Seretse and Ruth would be obliged to live abroad after Seretse's temporary return to settle his dispute with Tshekedi over property. Baring replied that Seretse's chieftainship would never be acceptable to South Africa so long as he was married to Ruth.

On Friday, March 3rd, Seretse Khama met Patrick Gordon Walker for the first time, at the C.R.O. offices in Whitehall. Gordon Walker had replaced the indecisive Noel-Baker as Commonwealth Relations minister in the new post-election Cabinet. According to his private secretary at the time, he was an ambitious and relatively youthful politician who got on well with C.R.O. officials. He consciously put his head in the noose of the Seretse affair as the price of a seat in Cabinet.4 Gordon Walker already had something of a reputation as a 'negrophobist', because of comments he had made in support of South Africa in deliberations over South West Africa as a British delegate at the United Nations. His own background was in India rather than in the white Dominions.5

The meeting began with Gordon Walker being introduced to Fraenkel. He then made a last-ditch attempt to get Seretse to resign his chieftainship voluntarily. Once more Seretse declined to do so, without first consulting his people, and protested that the direct rule being imposed on his people left all questions of instituting 'democracy' among the Bangwato in abeyance.

As he said good-bye to Seretse at the end of the meeting, in a moment unrecorded in official minutes, Gordon Walker made a clumsy male chauvinist and hurtful slur on Ruth's integrity which Seretse never forgave. Everything would be solved,
Gordon Walker suggested, if Seretse returned to Bechuanaland and left Ruth in England. She would soon attach herself to another man and forget him.6

On Monday, March 6th, the first regular business meeting of the new British cabinet considered Seretse's chieftainship as its first issue, even before going on to the desperate situation of the British economy. The decision, to withhold recognition of Seretse and to exile him for five years, was rushed through as a matter of urgency, with the addition that Tshekedi would be similarly treated. Seretse and Fraenkel were summoned to the C.R.O. for a meeting at 6 p.m. on the same day. Gordon Walker made the announcement to Seretse and asked him to keep it secret for a week, so it could be announced at a kgotla meeting in Serowe. Seretse's immediate response was: 'Am I being kicked out of my own country?'

Fraenkel protested that both Seretse and Ruth had been assured they would be free to return home after talks in London, and he had received the same impression from talking to W.A.W. Clark in person. Seretse said that he felt strongly that he had been tricked into coming to London, and was bitterly disappointed.

Seretse asked why the C.R.O. could not have made it clear from the start that they had no intention of recognizing him. Gordon Walker then claimed somewhat disingenuously that all that the C.R.O. had decided beforehand was to give Seretse the chance of 'voluntary resignation' in London. Gordon Walker went on to deny that South Africa had anything to do with the decision, which was purely for the welfare of the Bangwato 'tribe'. After discussing arrangements for legal proceedings against Tshekedi and the welfare of Ruth Khama, the long meeting ended with Gordon Walker once again declining to show anyone else the Harragin Report, which was solely 'of an advisory nature.'

Seretse, fuelled by a bitter personal resentment of Gordon Walker which he was never to lose, could no longer bottle up his boiling outrage at the injustice of the British government's diktat. First he broke the news to Ruth in a pithily worded telegram: 'Tribe and myself tricked by British Government. I am banned from whole protectorate. Love Seretse.'7

Then he broke his 17-month self-denying ordinance not to give interviews to the press. In Liesching's words, Seretse 'called a press conference on his own, blew the gaff, and therefore spoiled' all the well-laid plans of the C.R.O. to break the news in their own way.8 Seretse was reported as telling the press:

I am kicked out, and my wife is kicked out with me; that is the sum of it. I maintain it was because the British Government wanted to appease Dr Malan, and to keep the Union of South Africa in the Commonwealth that they have done what they have done ... It hurts a lot. It hurts as much as being told your people don't matter.9

The next morning, the British press, predominantly Tory-supporting and gunning for the just re-elected Labour government, had a field day airing Seretse's highly justified indignation. The BBC Overseas Service carried the news to one Casalis, the self-appointed town crier of Serowe. It was
the hot news of the newspapers in West and East Africa as well as South Africa, and was featured in the newspapers of North America, India and Commonwealth countries. The South African press, with the exception of the Johannesburg Star, welcomed the British government's decision. The New York Times, on the other hand, criticized the British government for giving way to Malan, when 'the wider problem of Native feelings throughout Africa is infinitely more important. The whole continent of Africa is heaving under the same disturbing forces that have transformed Asia since the war.' The Colonial Office obviously agreed, as it cabled all British governors in Africa to stand by for a parliamentary statement on Seretse Khama. The C.R.O. meanwhile softened up the Conservative Party central office, so that Opposition comments 'should not be unduly embarrassing to the Government.'

Gordon Walker as Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations stood up to make the announcement in the House of Commons at 2.37 pm on Wednesday, March 8th, 1950. The leader of the Liberal Party, Clem Davies, then expressed his regret at government interference in the relations of man and wife. The Rev Reggie Sorenson, a Labour back-bencher, then asked if there had been any communications with the South African government over the issue. It was at that moment that Gordon Walker uttered the bare-faced lie that was to remain the bedrock of justification of official policy towards Seretse Khama for successive British governments:

We have had no communication from the Government of the Union [of South Africa] nor have we made any communication to them. There have been no representations and no consultation in this matter.

The C.R.O. and Gordon Walker had taken care to square Anthony Eden and Lennox-Boyd on the Conservative front-bench, by letting them into the secret of South African official pressures prior to the parliamentary debate. The Conservative leader, Winston Churchill, however, doggedly pursued 'the point of honour' of whether Seretse was tricked into deposition and exile. He did not question the main policy. (He may have already received pleas from General Smuts in South Africa to support it.)

In a brief intervention later in the debate, Churchill uttered a one-liner about the Seretse Khama issue that was to become famous: 'It is a very disreputable transaction.' At another point in the long debate, Gordon Walker hesitated in using the word 'democratize' in justifying the reform of Bangwato tribal administration. A chorus of M.P.s interjected 'Malan-ize!' (The official record of debate was to report this as 'Mutualise!')

Only one significant concession to Seretse was announced to the generally hostile House. Seretse would be allowed to return temporarily to Lobatse in Bechuanaland, to settle legal issues with Tshekedi over property and to collect his wife (and forthcoming baby).

Gordon Walker's bare-faced lie to Parliament was a trifle too categorical for the gentlemen of the Commonwealth Relations Office. There was some panic and a flurry of correspondence with the South African government as a result. After all, Malan had stated twice in public meetings, at Paarl on September 28th and at
Bloemfontein on October 27th, 1949, that his government had immediately telegraphed the British government on hearing of the decision of the June kgotla in Serowe. Malan was a trifle confused. His government had cabled its High Commissioner, Leif Egeland, in London to make representations to the British government. But the principle of Malan's claims held good.

Now, at the end of March 1950, D.D. Forsyth in Cape Town telegraphed Egeland once again: 'Prime Minister appreciates, of course, delicacy of situation' - wickedly adding that there would be 'all possible discretion so as to avoid embarrassment to Gordon Walker.' Egeland guilelessly passed on a copy of this message to the Commonwealth Relations Office. The South African government had caught Gordon Walker by the tail.

The reaction of the Bangwato was to boycott the colonial administration, notably the kgotla assembly called by the High Commissioner to make the announcement on March 13th, 1950. The Bangwato could be legalistic too, claiming that only a true kgosi could convene a kgotla assembly.

The world press gathered in force to watch the public humiliation of such a grand proconsul and plenipotentiary of His Majesty as Sir Evelyn Baring, dressed in white with feathers on top of his solar topee. Montserrat, growing distraught tried to pacify the press; but only made matters worse by waspishly referring to the Bangwato regiments, peacefully picketing the boycott, as 'thugs'. Baring tried to engage the attention of the reporters by holding a press conference to explain away the reasons for Seretse's deposition and exile. But he found that even politically sympathetic South African journalists made it perfectly clear that they considered that what had really happened was the sacrifice of Seretse to save the High Commission Territories from transfer.'!

As a result of the boycott of his kgotla meeting, Baring took two decisive steps. The first was vindictive. He arranged for the immediate removal of a white South African couple at Palapye who had been actively friendly with Seretse and Ruth Khama. Alan Bradshaw and his wife managed the mine labour recruitment office at Palapye. Baring told Bradshaw's employers, the Native Recruiting Corporation in Johannesburg, a subsidiary of the Witwatersrand chamber of mines, that Bradshaw had helped the boycott of his kgotla.

Baring also put in hand moves to check the deterioration of law and order at Serowe. He arranged for the return to Serowe of two successful former district commissioners who had gone on to higher posts abroad. The toughminded Forbes Mackenzie was to be brought over from Swaziland. 'Gerry' Germond, who had developed a reputation for fierceness in the Solomon Islands of the Pacific Ocean - almost Botswana's antipodes - would be transferred back to the High Commission Territories' civil service from which he had come."
The first body in Britain to make a public protest on Seretse's behalf was a meeting of women gathered to celebrate International Women's Day an institution which Churchill regarded as communist-inspired.8 Fellow African students rallied round Seretse. One of the first protest letters addressed to Attlee was from the West African Students Club at Oxford University, signed by its president E.A. Boateng from the Gold Coast (Ghana), who was later to become a distinguished geographer. There was already a Campaign Committee for South Africa and the High Commission Territories among students at the London School of Economics. Other bodies that came to Seretse's aid included the National Council for Civil Liberties, and the League of Coloured Peoples. 19

The main leader of the Caribbean community in Britain, the famous cricketer Learie Constantine, brought together a Seretse Khama Fighting Committee. It held a meeting of 800 people in Dennison Hall, home of the Anti-Slavery Society on Vauxhall Bridge Road, on March 12th, 1950. Constantine presided, and the meeting carried a motion calling for Seretse's return to his people and for publication of the Harragin Report.

Seretse sat behind a table on the platform chain-smoking and feeling unwell. As the applause died down, Seretse apologized for being 'rather groggy.' When a woman shouted 'Cheer up, Seretse!' from the audience, he replied: 'Thank you.' He explained that he had been skipping meals because of the pressure of events. After a very short speech, Seretse sat down and was whisked off to a taxi - because he had to attend yet another protest meeting that night.

The Seretse Khama Fighting Committee presented itself to the new Colonial minister, James Griffiths, on March 17th, with Commonwealth Relations minister Gordon Walker in attendance. Members of the committee referred to Gordon Walker's reputation as a Negro-hater, a charge which he indignantly denied. Constantine, whom the Colonial Office accepted a man of 'a certain standing" even suggested that 'coloured British subjects' would be prepared to provide an army to defend the High Commission Territories from South African aggression.20

Support for Seretse Khama was surprisingly strong in Scotland, where nationalist resentment of English rule had taken on a new lease of life. Another Seretse Khama Defence Committee was founded in Edinburgh by a Nigerian student and a young lecturer in colonial and American history. After petitioning the Colonial Office, they held a protest meeting in Oddfellows Hall. The Scottish National Party then proudly announced that it had elected Seretse Khama as one of its vice-presidents.21

Meanwhile the Commonwealth Relations Office, holding to its resolution not to publish the Harragin Report, was 'cooking up' a White Paper to justify its actions against Seretse. Baring saw the main purpose of the White Paper as subtly referring to the 'geographic position and economic weakness' of the High Commission Territories in relation to their neighbours. It was intended to have a paragraph denying influence either by governments or white opinions in southern Africa. But the paragraph was dropped after Hector
McNeil, the new Secretary of State for Scotland, protested at its mendacity. Attlee's only objection was an 'Americanism' in the syntax, the use of the word 'around'. All mention of the real reason for Seretse's deposition was thereby avoided in the White Paper as published.

It was at this point that Sillery, the Resident Commissioner at Mafikeng, came near to resigning over such a 'highly disingenuous document.' "I hope" says Sillery in his unpublished memoirs, 'that posterity will not think that I had anything to do with it." Instead he was allowed to leave his post on a mid-year vacation to Britain, and was then asked by Baring not to return to Bechuanaland. Meanwhile, Gordon Walker began to waver under the onslaught of press and parliament. Government ministers were to later admit, in private, that there had been a danger of the Labour government falling in a vote of no confidence - if the Labour left were to combine with the Tories over the Seretse issue.

During parliamentary question time on March 16th, Gordon Walker appeared to concede that Seretse's imminent temporary return to Bechuanaland, to settle his affairs, might be allowed to become indefinite in length. Some Labour M.P.s then speculated on Seretse's being allowed to become Chief after a year. Reports of this in London made General Jan Smuts in Cape Town call urgently on Sir Evelyn Baring.

Baring reported that Smuts 'spoke very seriously to me.' Such a move, claimed Smuts, echoing his acolyte Forsyth eight or nine months earlier, would enflame white opinion in South Africa. It would enable the National Party to call and win another general election, demanding not only the High Commission Territories but also promising to declare South Africa a republic outside the Commonwealth.

Smuts was prepared to go to London to press the case against Seretse. Smuts had already written Churchill a long letter in the previous week begging Britain not to give way to the Bangwato, as it would be a bad example which would induce the 'natives' of South Africa to resist their government as well.

The British government intended to publish the White Paper while Seretse was en route to Lobatse by air and out of the way of the press. But Seretse postponed his flight on the BOAC flying-boat to Victoria Falls; and forfeited a free ticket from the C.R.O. in order to leave on the day after the White Paper was published. As it turned out, the White Paper said so little, that little could be said of it. Seretse wrote a well-argued letter to The Times newspaper, which appeared on March 24th, the morning of his departure. He mocked the official reasoning of giving the Bangwato 'more representation of the people' when the people's will had been ignored. As for himself, he had been 'banished ... For what? No crime, except that I have married an Englishwoman.' An official was to scribble next to this newspaper clipping in the C.R.O. files, 'worse than a crime - a blunder.' The South African press, well prepared by Montserrat, generally welcomed the White Paper. The Afrikaans newspaper Die Burger thought the most disturbing new phenomenon revealed by the Seretse affair was 'the existence in Britain of a strong clamorous and uninformed mass [opinion] on conditions and problems' of southern Africa. The Cape Argus published articles by old Sir Charles Rey,
Tshekedi’s nemesis of the 1930s, who now supported Tshekedi against Seretse. Another ex-governor retired in the Cape, Sir Charles Dundas, had remarked ten days earlier in the same newspaper: ‘Has it occurred to you that Seretse's uncle got into serious trouble for beating a European, and now Seretse is in trouble for marrying one?’ 28

The West African press responded more vigorously. 'Not Cricket, Sir!' and 'Et Tu, British' were the headlines in the Lagos Daily Service. The Nigerian Eastern Mail attacked the White Paper 'as a monument of insincerity ... a slap in the face for all moderate Africans who have ... urged co-operation with Britain and confidence in her promise to lead us on the road to selfgovernment.' The Freetown Evening Dispatch in Sierra Leone thundered in more characteristic old coastal style: 'Is this democracy or is it a demonstration of hitleric power? The African cosmos shakes, the African ground trembles and from the four corners of the African horizon comes out the words ... "Let justice be done though the heavens should fall". '29

In India, a Calcutta newspaper claimed: 'For every white man placated in South Africa, a hundred Indians and Pakistanis have been affronted.' Krishna Menon, a former Labour political figure in Britain, made representations over Seretse, first as India's High Commissioner to London and then as India's U.N. representative in New York.

Far more disturbing for the British government was a burst of concern from the United States of America, Ruth and Seretse having featured twice in Life magazine in two months.30 David C. Williams of Americans for Democratic Action (national chairman, Hubert H. Humphrey) privately contacted Gordon Walker. The C.R.O. were dismissive until their Foreign Office colleagues impressed on them the importance of the A.D.A. as ‘a sound and useful organisation ... associated with the Democrat Party.’ One interview with them was worth more than any single newspaper report. When Williams met Gordon Walker he presented him with a letter written by a socialist called L. Finnegan, a public relations officer for one of America's two great trade union organizations. Finnegan had written:

It would be difficult to exaggerate the repercussions of the Seretse affair among some quarters here ... The Negro press - which is a highly influential medium - is full of the Seretse debacle ... unhappy conclusion: our discrimination, our jim crow ain't really so bad ...

i wish you could hear some of the union Negro leaders talk about the Labor Govt now.3

While Seretse had become a centre of press attention in London, Ruth was the centre of press attention in Serowe. A South African journalist who met Seretse before he left London, having seen him before when he was not famous, 'more than half expected that all this ballyhoo would have gone to his head, but 'found him just the same quiet, modest chap.' Seretse was receiving offers to join legal partnerships from the Gold Coast to as far afield as Brazil.

South African newspaper reporters were equally surprised to be well received in Serowe, with a choice of teas, by Ruth Khama, who 'has emerged from the role of mystery woman to one of the most publicised women in the world 32
C.R.O. and other colonial officials began to see Ruth as their real enemy. She had been quoted in the press calling them 'little nitwits.' A Picture Post journalist called Fyfe Robertson (later made famous by television) tried to give the C.R.O. a more realistic picture in April 1950 on his return from Serowe. He told them that Ruth Khama had 'practically no contact with local tribesmen, cannot speak two words of their language, and shows no inclination to take an interest in native affairs.' 33

It was to be Tshekedi Khama, rather than Seretse or Ruth Khama, who was to cause by far the most trouble for successive British governments over the next six years.

Seretse landed in Gaborone in south-east Bechuanaland on Friday, March 31st, 1950, in a small hired Dragon Rapide plane. It had flown down the railway from Livingstone and Bulawayo in the north, over-flying and circling the airfield at Mahalapye. A press cameraman took an evocative photograph of Ruth Khama, heavily pregnant, waving a furled umbrella in greeting to the plane which was not allowed to land in the Bangwato Reserve.

Hundreds of Bangwato, who had camped at the morula tree near the railway station, greeted Seretse at Gaborone airfield. Four more planes packed full with reporters landed from Johannesburg at about the same time. 'Movietone' newsfilm cameras recorded Seretse's greeting by his 'uncle' Peto Sekgoma, with the small dog of a visiting anthropologist running around their heels.34

Seretse was escorted in a car on the rough dirt road 70 kilometres south to a house in the small railway township of Lobatse. Here he awaited permission to visit the Bangwato Reserve.

Seretse was permitted home for a one-day visit on Sunday, April 16th, 1950. He and Ruth met and embraced in the early hours of that morning, with cameras flashing around them, as Seretse arrived at their house in Serowe driving a small truck." For the whole of that day, Seretse was dogged in his footsteps by the ever vigilant Montserrat, who also growled and snapped at the press reporters.

Seretse was officially gagged from speaking to any Bangwato. But so many people gathered round that he was obliged out of politeness to address and greet them, asking them to disperse quietly. This made Forbes Mackenzie, the new District Commissioner who had just taken over at Serowe, furious - though he had to admit that Seretse had not gone far enough to be banned from a second visit to Serowe.

That second visit took place at very short notice on the evening of May 15th, at the Sekgoma Memorial Hospital in Serowe, a few hours after the birth of Jacqueline Tebogo Khama. Great was the joy among C.R.O. officials in London that it was not a boy, who could lay claim to the throne. The elderly Baxter did not take kindly, however, to younger officials running and shouting in the corridors 'It's a girl! It's a girl!' 36

Exactly a month later, Seretse collected Ruth and Jacqueline in his applegreen Chevrolet. They drove south together along the long and bumpy dirt road to Seretse's accommodation in Lobatse.
Meanwhile, Seretse and Tshekedi were reported to have started moves towards legal reconciliation over property at the end of April. Tshekedi, assisted by Michael Fairlie, a colonial officer assigned to the task, had spent months counting and dividing cattle - between those of Khama's will, which Tshekedi claimed as his own, and those of Sekgoma's will, which Tshekedi acknowledged as Seretse's.17 (It was Tshekedi's rounding up of royal cattle for himself which had incited anti-Rametsana demonstrations in Serowe in April.) Seretse had wanted to sue Tshekedi in the high court at Lobatse for a greater share of the royal herds. Eventually the two men were bought together by intermediaries.

On July 8th, uncle and nephew went off in a truck on a tour to inspect the cattle-posts in question, in remote sandy reaches of the England-sized Bangwato Reserve. For almost three weeks Seretse and Tshekedi lived closely together. In the long hours of bumping along dusty main roads and winding along sand-tracks, sitting by camp-fires on cold winter nights and sharing the food cooked for them by retainers, they regained something of their old intimacy. Tshekedi rediscovered 'my Seretse of old.'

On their first stop, at Mookane on the southern border of the Reserve, they agreed to be frank with each other. Tshekedi subsequently 'boldly suggested' to Seretse that it was perhaps best for the Bangwato if a form of Tribal Council replaced chieftainship, and that they both gave up their hereditary claims to office. Seretse should then be allowed to return from exile overseas. Furthermore, a federation of all the Bechuana tribes was desirable for progress. Seretse seems to have thought these generally good ideas, though there was no mention of a timetable or acceptance of Tshekedi's previous contention that a federation should be led by the Bakwena as senior tribe. In return Tshekedi thought himself generous in conceding four disputed cattle-posts.

Seretse and his uncle shook hands on an out-of-court settlement and division of property on June 17th, 'in an atmosphere of great cordiality.' Seretse realized that he would have to sell off many of his 2 400 cattle (at upwards of £10 each) to have capital for settling overseas. 38 Hence Tshekedi drove to see the High Commissioner in Pretoria on August 5th, to ask for a very large government loan to buy many of Seretse's cattle. Tshekedi’s lawyer, Buchanan, guessed that Seretse must be clearing out of the country for good - cashing in his 2 400 head of cattle at £10 each.39

Apparently nothing in all the exploratory talks between Seretse and Tshekedi was said about Seretse's marriage. The first meeting of Tshekedi with Ruth was purely by chance and undramatic, in a Lobatse trading store on or around August 1st. Tshekedi then charmed Ruth by going round to the house where Seretse and Ruth were staying, where he was complimentary about their small baby.

But the fate of Seretse and Ruth Khama was already being sealed by the British government. Cabinet had met on June 29th and decided that Seretse and Ruth must be expelled if necessary from the whole Protectorate. It was also desirable to induce them to live somewhere other than Britain, as 'Seretse's wife was likely to be [too] troublesome.40
When Seretse and Ruth Khaia declined to leave Bechuanaland voluntarily, they were served with deportation orders on August 2nd by W.A.W. Clark who drove to Lobatse from the High Commissioner's office in Pretoria. Clark was impressed by their sang-froid on receiving the news. Ruth moved him to reluctant admiration with a surprisingly light-hearted humour. 'Seretse undoubtedly feels very sore; his often lethargic manner cloaks deep feelings.' Clark arranged for Seretse and Ruth to fly from Gaborone to Livingstone, at the Victoria Falls, on August 17th, 1950. They would fly in the R.A.F. plane allocated to the High Commissioner's office, a small Devon passenger aircraft. After Clark got wind from Seretse of his rapprochement with his uncle, Baring managed to extract the gist of it from Tshekedi. It sent Baring into a flat spin, especially the suggestion that both could return to the Bangwato Reserve as private citizens, having both renounced the chieftainship. Baring had to tell Tshekedi that Seretse's return in any guise 'would inevitably arouse passions in the Union.' Tshekedi agreed to play down the reconciliation and to keep it secret until after he had met Seretse again in London early the next year.

Baring and the C.R.O. were determined to break the new accord between Seretse and Tshekedi, because it would blow their cover-story justifying Seretse's exclusion from Bechuanaland. It would leave no credible public justification for the secret 'main policy' of keeping Seretse out to appease 'white South Africa.' On August 16th, 1950, Seretse and Tshekedi agreed on a Joint Statement in Lobatse, which was made to those Bangwato present and copied for the High Commissioner. They called on the people to end their boycott of the colonial administration's direct rule of the Bangwato Reserve 'while discussions continue on ... a system of Native Administration acceptable to and run by the people themselves.' They called on the colonial government to involve both of them, as well as other African and European experts, in working out a new system of tribal government. Finally they both claimed the rights of 'citizenship' as individuals and asked that they both be allowed to return home to 'Bamangwatoland.'

Addressing a group of Bangwato, Seretse is said to have explained: 'It is useless for you to call me your chief when I am chief of the fish only, and it is better to regard me as an ordinary citizen living among you.' The two men also committed to paper, in a secret Aide-Memoire, the understanding they had reached on those cold nights by the camp-fire in July. The Aide-Memoire was, in Seretse's reported words a year later, 'a gentleman's agreement; laying out certain possibilities such as both of us renouncing our own and own children's claims to the tribal chieftainship.' It stated that they would both return to 'Bamangwatoland' to participate in politics and administration only as 'ordinary citizens.' The Aide-Memoire was to be the basis for further negotiations between Seretse and Tshekedi when they met in England in the New Year. Neither would publish its terms without first consulting the other. Meanwhile they would both prepare the ground for acceptance of its proposed terms with 'people who are in contact with Government circles.'
The waters were subsequently muddied by their legal advisers. Buchanan tried to encourage Tshekedi to trick Seretse into surrendering the succession rights of his children while retaining those of his own. Fraenkel handed out a printed broadsheet of declaration to the Bangwato on behalf of Seretse to the press, just as Seretse's plane was taking off from Gaborone airfield - its Setswana version being addressed Go batho ba me ('To my people'). The printed text included phrases which Seretse had deleted from the final version handed to British officials, referring to himself as 'hereditary Chief according to your custom.' Tshekedi failed in subsequent attempts to get these corrections noted by the press, through his old friend the New York Times correspondent in Johannesburg.47

Seretse flew out of Gaborone into exile as arranged, on the morning of August 17th, accompanied by his wife and daughter, with his half-sister Naledi acting as nurse maid. The Devon aircraft had been surrounded until take-off by police and R.A.F. guards deployed to stop any kidnap-rescue attempt. Nicholas Montserrat was assigned as their official escort on board the Devon. At Montserrat's suggestion, the plane buzzed streets of cheering people at Serowe on its way to Livingstone in Northern Rhodesia. This cannot have pleased Montserrat's boss, Baring, who had allotted his official aircraft to Seretse precisely to avoid 'any stunts such as flying low over Mahalapye or Serowe to bid farewell.'48

Next morning, Montserrat went to pick up the Khamas from the District Commissioner's house in the town of Livingstone, where they had stayed overnight. Seretse refused to hurry his breakfast to catch the BOAC Sunderland flying-boat, which was about to land on the Zambezi river above the Victoria Falls on its way north from the Vaal Dam in South Africa:

I could not really blame him; he had me by the tail anyway, and my impatience as he worked his way through the mealie porridge, the eggs and bacon, the soft rolls with chunky marmalade, the cup after cup of coffee, must have been laughable - especially as it was the last laugh he was going to enjoy in this part of the world, for a very long time.

Once the Khamas were on board the Sunderland, Montserrat melodramatically cabled the High Commissioner's office in Pretoria with the single word: 'EXIT.49

The Johannesburg Star newspaper complimented Seretse on 4a great deal of dignity' in the manner of his leaving. The C.R.O. had even more cause to be grateful, because Seretse also dropped his legal case against the High Commissioner. Seretse's lawyer, Fraenkel, had started proceedings on July 20th, to get the High Commissioner's refusal to recognize Seretse as chief declared invalid. As well as being publicly acclaimed in 1949, Seretse could claim to have been recognized as chief back in 1925, on the death of his father. The year 1925, of course, predated all the legislation of 1934, 1943 and 1950, upon which the High Commissioner based his powers not to recognize Seretse. The C.R.O's legal advisers eventually concluded, after Seretse had actually dropped the case as a gesture of good will, that Seretse would have won his case.
They therefore rushed to frame more watertight legislation to invalidate Seretse's case should he revive it. In the words of the principal legal officer:
What we can and must do ... is to ensure ... that the law is such that ... the Courts will have to give the answer we desire. 50

The Khamas were greeted as celebrities by the press in London. Reporters cooed over baby Jacqueline with free drinks provided by Seretse at the Grosvenor Court Hotel in Davies Street, Mayfair. Seretse was comfortably off in financial terms. He was to receive a monthly allowance of £1 100 before tax from the British government, charged against Bechuanaland Protectorate funds. He also had capital from liquidation of cattle assets back home. He had left the rest of his cattle under the charge of his 'uncle' Peto Sekgoma.
The apple-green Chevrolet, a right-hand drive American car with higher value in Britain than in Bechuanaland, was also being shipped over dutyfree. It was included together with household furniture being shipped at government expense. (When the car arrived at the docks in London, Seretse went to collect it. He met with obvious racist resentment from dock-workers, jealous that a mere 'nigger' should possess such opulence.)51

On October 4th the family took up residence in a third floor flat at No. 7 Fernshaw Mansions in Chelsea. It was a fairly prosperous old block of flats with a fresh coat of paint and a Turkish stair-carpet. Peter Lewis, a junior officer of the C.R.O., visited them there as part of his duties on November 14th. Ruth and Seretse had made themselves at home with leopard-skin and buck karosses on the floor. Baby Jacqueline was being washed and dressed for bed in front of the sitting-room fire. Seretse's sister Naledi lived with them, as she was enrolling to train as a nurse in London. A 'probably Germanic' woman helped with washing and cooking.

Seretse told Lewis that he had arranged to re-start tutorials for the Bar exams in January 1951. Lewis tried to encourage him not to rush into exams before November 1951 or even May 1952. The couple seemed resigned to a long exile, and Seretse talked of becoming a barrister in West or East Africa. They gave Lewis an 'alarmingly hot' curry, and at one point Seretse excused himself to listen to the closing stages of a boxing match on the radio. Otherwise they drank whisky and discussed the continuance of postwar food rationing in Britain, Christmas cards, marriage and divorce. They deplored hasty marriages and the number of divorces at present.

Talking about British politics, Ruth called herself a 'true blue Conservative', and referred to Seretse as a 'Socialist'. As for poor Sir 9ve n Baring, who was retiring as High Commissioner due to ill health, C.R.O. officials were surprised to see in Lewis's report that Seretse and Ruth talked so sympathetically about him. (The enormous amount of administrative work and stress caused by the Seretse 'problem' had been the major reason for Baring's sickness!)52

Seretse's accord with Tshekedi had been broken a few days before Lewis's visit. Tshekedi felt himself baited to extremes, first by the words and then by the deeds of Peto Sekgoma, who was acting as Seretse's agent in 'Bamangwatoland'. Peto started by digging wells for Seretse on the Nata river in the north at the Gogwane
cattle-post claimed by Tshekedi. After Tshekedi contacted Seretse, Seretse agreed to stop Peto, but urged Tshekedi to make his promised visit to England as soon as possible. What then caused Tshekedi’s fury was the deliberate arson - he was sure at Peto's instigation - of the royal house behind the kgotla on October 17th. The fire destroyed the memorabilia not just of Tshekedi but of the whole Khama family notably the Bible and other mementos of Khama's visit to Queen Victoria in 1895. Tshekedi also got word that Seretse's friend, the M.P. Fenner Brockway, had stood up in Westminster, on October 19th, to ask that Seretse be designated chief because Tshekedi was now agreeable. This misrepresentation, Tshekedi concluded, must be Seretse's doing. On November 8th Tshekedi wrote accusing Seretse of going back on their secret agreement. Without waiting for a reply, he broke the story to the press four days later. "3

Lewis of the C.R.O. visited Seretse and Ruth Khama for a second time on January 31st, 1951. He found the Chelsea flat now almost completely carpeted with bigger and better karosses. A two foot high photographic collage of his father and grandfather, given to Seretse by Tshekedi the previous August, hung above the fireplace and dominated the sitting-room. After the baby was put to bed, the Germanic baby-sitter was left in charge and Lewis took the couple out to dinner. They went by No.14 red bus to a Hungarian restaurant chosen by Lewis, the 'Czarda' in Dean Street, Soho. Seretse was disappointed not to find steak on the menu but enjoyed stew. They drank red wine with the meal: 'Seretse confessed later that he would rather have had beer.' Seretse and Ruth then took Lewis to a club of their choice, the 'Sugar Hill' off Duke Street in St James. The club was frequented by blacks and whites. Seretse introduced Lewis to the Jamaican athlete Macdonald Bailey. (W.A.W. Clark at the C.R.O. minuted on Lewis's report that the 'Sugar Hill' was hardly the sort of place of which Tshekedi would have approved.) Lewis was impressed by Seretse's sense of the comic, and noticed that he suppressed any sign of bitterness at his treatment by the British. Above all he had 'an honesty and directness in dealing with people, and a right judgment of them ... It would to my mind be a tragedy if these qualities were to be frustrated by bitterness, or inactivity, or neglect.' 54

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Moves towards the formation of a new form of 'tribal' government went slowly ahead at Serowe. On December 16th, 1950, Keaboka Kgamane was nominated as the head of the tribal council, sometimes referred to as its 'president'. But the C.R.O. in London disagreed with the High Commissioner in Pretoria over the council, declining to approve of the new council until Tshekedi’s followers were allowed to join it freely. Baring flew to London to tackle W.A.W Clark, Tshekedi's main supporter, who had by now moved to the C.R.O. Baring argued that Tshekedi was 'proving very difficult', was 'no longer of value as an ally', and therefore ought to be decisively checked. Tshekedi and his followers were intensely unpopular among the
Bangwato, because they had removed cattle and property from Serowe previously considered 'tribal' or royal property; and they had allegedly used strong-armed tactics to do so. Baring and Clark came to a compromise: to adopt a policy of reduced speed in pushing the formation of a 'new model native authority' at Serowe. They invested their hopes on the emergence of a 'third division' in Bangwato politics - people who might grow fat on the sweets of office, loyal neither to Seretse nor Tshekedi, and preferably representing the 'allied tribes' rather than the old Phuti or pure Bangwato rulers.

The C.R.O's minister, Patrick Gordon Walker, steeled himself to visit Serowe on February 1st, 1951. It was to be a stop between visits to Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, both of which were making claims to take over Bechuanaland. Gordon Walker puffed his pipe and addressed up to 10 000 Bangwato in the Serowe kgotla, beginning with a greeting that followed phonetic notes: 'Bangwato, Doo-may-lang' ['Bangwato, Dumelang']. He spoke of plans to develop water resources and an abattoir in the Bechuanaland Protectorate as a whole. The reply of the people to Gordon Walker was given by Monametse Chiepe, B.A., the bright political star of the new Bangwato regime drawn from 'allied tribes' previously considered subordinate. Chiepe's speech was summed up in the newspapers as: 'Give us back Seretse. Banish Tshekedi.' Seretse in London must have taken heart from the press reports and cinema newsreel. Tshekedi was even more furious than before.55

Gordon Walker, once again confirming his reputation as a racist, wrote back to the C.R.O. arguing the need to 'start a judicious campaign about the dangers of a half-caste Chief.' He added:

The ideal outcome would be that the Bamangwato themselves should say to Seretse that he must either abandon Ruth and become Chief or renounce the Chieftainship. If we firmly exclude Tshekedi, I believe that this may happen. Baring has seen the above and agrees with it.

W.A.W. Clark at the C.R.O. was appalled. The British government could not be party to 'racialistic' propaganda, just as it could never be party to iengineering' a divorce.56

Clark could also see no reason why Tshekedi should not be content in exile at Rametsana. Tshekedi was now arguably the biggest rancher in the whole of southern Africa, with 25 000 head of cattle. His further energies might also be used by using him as a consultant to government on the development of water resources, etc.

Tshekedi, however, was obsessed with the fact of his banishment from the Bangwato Reserve. He arrived in London on March 16th, 1951, and did not leave until the beginning of August. During that time he pressed ceaselessly for the end of his exile at Rametsana in the Kweneng Reserve, and for his return home to the Bangwato Reserve. Rev Michael Scott assisted him closely and Scott's aide, the South African political activist Mary Benson, became Tshekedi's temporary secretary. As she puts it in her autobiography, Tshekedi flooded the C.R.O. with 'long and complex memoranda' in a military style campaign to break down the ministry's resistance to his viewpoint. When these memoranda proved to be
ineffectual, Tshekedi turned to lobbying political support inside all three political parties at Westminster. More than a month went by, and Tshekedi had still not contacted Seretse in London. Seretse and his family had meanwhile moved out of their Chelsea flat, when the lease had run out in March, to a flat in Albany Street on the eastern side of Regent's Park. Seretse had had another meeting with Gordon Walker after the latter's return to Britain in March 1951. Seretse was evidently worried about Tshekedi's visit, and had given up at least temporarily on his legal studies. The C.R.O. had to contact Seretse again in early May, in order to get his consent to some of Tshekedi's cattle ranching arrangements. They tracked him down on a motoring tour of Cornwall. Seretse interrupted the holiday and drove his family back to London, where he proved to be amenable enough on the ranching question. Tshekedi took this as a cue to make contact.

When Tshekedi phoned and asked Seretse to visit him, Seretse said his uncle must visit him first. A few days later Tshekedi went round to Albany Street, on the occasion of Jacqueline's first birthday. The two men talked calmly for a while without rancour, and subsequently kept up occasional contacts while Tshekedi was in town. But Seretse declined to publicly support his uncle's return from Rametsana to the Bangwato Reserve, as Tshekedi still did not publicly accept the marriage. Seretse reserved his position and reverted to previous claims by issuing a press statement of his own on June 5th, arguing for his own return home as chief to assist in 'peace, democratic government and a progressive improvement in their standard of living' for his people. As for the succession of his children, that was a purely academic question that could be settled in kgotla many years hence.

By the end of June 1951, the Labour Party government was once again facing the prospect of a parliamentary defeat on a vote of no confidence over a Khama, though this time it was Tshekedi. Once again the Cabinet was told in no uncertain terms that it was more important to keep South Africa in the Commonwealth than to attend to the honour of a Khama. Baring had been told this by J.G.N. Strauss, Smuts's successor as head of the United Party. D.D. Forsyth was also in London to put the South African Prime Minister's case. Defence and economic considerations between Britain and South Africa were now even more critical. The white settlers of Southern Rhodesia also had to be placated in order to get the proposed Central African Federation (of Southern and Northern Rhodesia with Nyasaland) up and running.

Tshekedi cobbled together an alliance of sufficient Labour M.P.s together with Liberals and Conservatives for the government to feel threatened. The Liberal Party arranged for a debate in the Commons, while the right/left combination of Lords Salisbury and Stansgate (father of Tony Benn) raised a debate in the Lords. Cabinet had already decided that the best ploy was to leave the decision to the Bangwato, confident that the Bangwato would vote to keep Tshekedi out. There would be ‘a further kgotla in Serowe at which two or three M.P.’s will be present as observers.
The Commons debate, on the Liberals' motion to rescind Tshekedi's banishment, lasted from 3.45 in the afternoon until the division bells rang at 10 that night. The debate was wide-ranging, and both Attlee and Churchill were somewhat self-congratulatory about its qualities.

Attlee: I think it is all to the good that, in the midst of present world affairs, the House should devote a day to the affairs of a small tribe in Africa, and concern ourselves with the rights of individual citizens.

Churchill: We have had a deeply interesting debate and I think I may say that I have rarely listened to a debate which has caused more heart searches on both sides of the House than this ... all of us want to give a right, honest, sincere, truthful opinion upon the issues which are before us.

The parliamentary whips on both sides of the House forced M.P.s to vote against their consciences, and the vote was lost by 300 to 279.61 Churchill, passing a Labour member going to vote in the other lobby, remarked with a grin: 'We are both going in the wrong direction. A future Labour Party leader, Michael Foot, was to recall this occasion as 'the worst vote I ever cast in the House.'62 Tshekedi Khama, assisted by Michael Scott and Mary Benson, continued to lobby heavily among parliamentarians until he returned home in August. Seretse and Ruth were also feted by their parliamentary supporters. The eccentric Tom Driberg of the Labour Party invited them to his bizarre wedding reception on the riverside terrace of the House of Commons. This was the first of a number of occasions when Seretse made humorous play on the embarrassment of white friends who unthinkingly used the racist expression 'nigger in the woodpile'. In this case the perpetrator was Kingsley Martin, editor of the New Statesman, a weekly political journal considered left-wing but extremely influential.63 To satisfy the pro-Tshekedi lobby, the Labour government sent out three observers to Bechuanaland to attend kgotla meetings in July 1951. The three men—a retired trade unionist, an academic, and a former independent M.P.—were dubbed the three Marx brothers by the American photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White. All over 'Bamangwatoland' they listened to endless village kgotla meetings and argued among themselves. The bluff trade unionist, as a man of the people, proved most popular with the Bangwato. He found them to be 'a polite courteous, friendly folk, whose strongest weapon appears to be their tongue. They can talk an Englishman out of existence.

Eventually the professor and the unionist reported back, with a dissenting report from the ex-M.P. Not only did people not want Tshekedi back, but the people were demanding the return of Seretse as kgosi.64 Once again the Labour Party government was faced with publishing an embarrassing report, showing as it did the strength of support for Seretse - as well as opposition to Tshekedi.

Attlee was disposed not to publish the observers' report at all. He allowed the question of publication to be overtaken by the fall of the Labour government in October 1951. A crisis in economic and defence affairs forced the government to fight another general election.
The officials of the Commonwealth Relations Office were determined that any new British government should not lose sight of what had become known as 'our main policy' - to keep South Africa friendly by 'continued exclusion of Seretse.' C.R.O. bureaucrats prided themselves on 'running' their ministers and assistant ministers, and keeping the initiative for themselves. To keep their political masters 'well below the salt' was their aim.

The C.R.O. made good use of the interregnum before the Conservative Party took office. The High Commissioner's office in Pretoria suggested that the 'the ban on Seretse' should be made 'permanent'. There was no other way that the Bangwato could be persuaded to nominate an alternative kgosi. It was also suggested that Britain did not have the military will or capacity to resist South Africa taking over Bechuanaland by force. Percival Liesching and Arthur Clark in London obviously agreed. The C.R.O.'s briefing for the new Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations had a nice turn of phrase. It argued for continued 'appeasement' [sic] of South Africa, on the grounds that 'the future happiness and well-being of 1 000 000 Africans' was at stake in the High Commission Territories.

The new minister was Lord Ismay, Churchill's wartime confidant now given the C.R.O. as a sinecure, so that he could sit in Cabinet close to his patron's ear. Ismay deluded himself that he knew his own mind and could ignore the Civil Service element in the C.R.O. But he proved to be perfectly pliable, as he plunged into the C.R.O.'s planned 'comprehensive solution' of Bangwato affairs: Tshekedi back In, Seretse permanently Out, and Rasebolai (Tshekedi's right-hand man who was third in line after Seretse and Tshekedi) as chief. Ismay was to become particularly fond of the C.R.O. metaphor of sacrificing one man - even a good man - for the welfare of one million.

Tshekedi flew over to see Ismay. C.R.O. officials were surprised to see Tshekedi coming out of Ismay's office one day, arm-in-arm with him like the closest of old friends. They had been talking long and hard alone together, mostly about cattle and farming. Ismay insisted on calling him 'Farmer Tshekedi', as well as 'Chief Tshekedi'. He approved Tshekedi's immediate return to live in the Bangwato Reserve as a private citizen. (Tshekedi had already sent scouts to choose a new village site for him in the Bangwato Reserve south of the Tswapong hills.)

Back in Serowe, the Bangwato, led by Keaboka, held a kgotla meeting to protest against an editorial in The Times suggesting that Rasebolai Kgamane would soon be made chief. They knew that meant Tshekedi would be behind Rasebolai in effective control again. When Tshekedi's impending return was officially announced, the Bangwato again protested. An editorial in the illiberal Johannesburg Rand Daily Mail snapped back: 'Who, in any case are the Bamangwato to have wishes? Let them know their place.'

The second stage of the C.R.O.'s 'comprehensive solution' was Seretse's permanent exclusion. Though there were signs in C.R.O. thinking that 'permanent' might not mean for ever, the idea of permanence had to be got across to Seretse and the Bangwato - so that Rasebolai could be elected by the Bangwato in his place.
The C.R.O. first warned Seretse, via his lawyer Rathcreedan, that his monthly allowance would be docked if he continued to make public statements calling himself 'chief. The C.R.O. was, however, split over whether to act on making Seretse's exclusion 'permanent' before or after a Bangwato delegation under Keaboka, being organized in the New Year of 1952, boarded ship for England.7

What pushed the C.R.O. into action, in early 1952, was political developments at Serowe.

First, there was the emergence at last of a 'third party' among the Bangwato, opposed to the 'Keaboka crowd' as well as to Tshekedi. It consisted of young intellectuals such as Monametsie Chiepe, Seretse's cousin Lenyeletse, Mout Nwako and the Koma brothers (Gaolese and Kenneth). They were all friends of Seretse as an individual, but not necessarily supporters of him as kgosi.

Second, there was the quite extraordinary revolt of district officers at Serowe, protesting at the duplicitous policies of His Majesty's government towards their Bangwato charges. The revolt was quickly hushed-up; the leaders were quietly transferred to posts elsewhere in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. But it sent a tremor of shock all the way up to the C.R.O. and the Cabinet, and strengthened the call for the smack of firm government and decisiveness in British policy towards the Bangwato.

Third, the 'Keaboka crowd' had fallen under the influence of paramount chief Sobhuza II of Swaziland, who was pushing the idea that the solution to all problems was for Seretse to divorce Ruth. The C.R.O. knew that there was no question of Seretse divorcing Ruth; and that, given 'our main policy" he was unacceptable to South Africa even if he divorced Ruth. But the pressures from Keaboka et.al. on Seretse to divorce might push him in the alternative direction of voluntary abdication. That would give him the chance of a return home some day as a private citizen, rather than being banned and exiled for eternity. 72 Seretse and Ruth were taking active steps to settle down for a long exile. The Khama family moved out of the Regent's Park flat to a rented house 30 kilometres away in the stock-broker belt of Surrey. They rented a house in the commuter village of Chipstead, near Epsom, which was to be a temporary base while looking for a house to purchase.

Seretse made an attempt to re-start his studies for the Bar under the tutorship of the radical lawyer Dingle Foot, brother of the Labour M.P. Michael Foot and of the colonial administrator Hugh Foot. But Dingle Foot, who had previously signed public letters of support for Seretse, now declared himself to be in the camp of Tshekedi's supporters, and declined to take Seretse on.73

Seretse was evidently tempted to surrender to what both friends and foes alike diagnosed as the streak of indolence in his character. He was settling down in a much more comfortable environment than he had ever known before. He now got on famously well with Ruth's father, who had previously disowned Ruth over the marriage. Both were humorous and kindly men at heart. Photos taken during the 1951-52 winter show Seretse and Ruth with old friends such as Charles Njonjo, or playing with Jacqueline on a boating pond on Blackheath Common near Ruth's parents' place in Lewisham.
Seretse and Ruth Khama were invited by Lord Ismay for cocktails at his London home on March 13th, 1952. Ruth was tense and defensive at first, but settled down to charm both Lord and Lady Ismay. The amiable Ismay concluded he could do business with Seretse as he had with Tshekedi. He arranged to see Seretse and Ruth again in his office at the C.R.O. on Monday, March 24th. Ismay would have him Lord Salisbury, the ultra rightwing peer who was waiting in the wings to take over as minister for Commonwealth Relations when Ismay retired in the near future.

Ismay conducted the formal interview as a subtle exercise in wearing Seretse down by a mixture of threat and charm. He began by remarking amiably enough that the Bangwato had taken up more of his time as minister than any other issue. He then talked of the need for a new chief, and regretted Seretse could never go back as chief. At this point, Ismay noted that 'Mrs. Khama showed signs of distress. But the meeting thereafter seemed less strained, with the cards face up on the table. In reference to the supposed irresponsibility of the marriage, Ismay confessed that he 'would very likely have done the same thing [as Seretse] myself.' But, and here he slipped a stiletto into Seretse's conscience, Seretse had not made amends by studying hard enough since then. However, Seretse had undoubted talents, and needed a fresh start in life. Ismay had therefore persuaded the Colonial Office to offer Seretse a position in the colonial service of the Caribbean island of Jamaica.

Ismay ended his peroration by giving Seretse the option of abdicating his rights to chieftainship, or of compelling 'us' to exclude him by law. Ismay denied he was 'holding a pistol at their heads,' and told Seretse and Ruth to go away and think about their answer until Wednesday. Seretse asked two quick questions of clarification, and promised to keep the negotiations secret until Wednesday. That meant, he said 'with a smile, that he would not consult any Members of Parliament. Lord Salisbury, who had sat by silently, then added a final word, and the meeting was over.

Ismay dictated a draft minute of the meeting: 'Neither of them by look or deed gave any clue as to what their decision was likely to be. Seretse would make a good poker player; so would his wife.' Rathcreedan, Seretse's ancient London lawyer, telephoned Clark at the C.R.O. the next day. Clark had difficulty in unscrambling the old man's rambling discourse. He understood that the Khamas were 'undoubtedly attracted by the Jamaica offer,' but Seretse could not be seen 'running away to a cushy job' nor could he betray his people's trust. The Bangwato were now unanimously in favour of his return as chief. It was too late to abdicate as he might have done two years earlier.

There was a second meeting in the C.R.O. two days later at 3 pm on Wednesday, March 26th. Salisbury took the chair as the new Secretary of State, but Ismay was also present. Salisbury was a slight and almost wolverine figure, with piercing eyes and pencil moustache.

Seretse began with a long set speech replying one-by-one to Ismay's points of the Monday. His people had forgiven him and all now wanted him to be chief. The
British government should await the imminent arrival of the Bangwato delegates in London before making any decision. (Precisely what the British government was determined not to do.)

Ismay chipped in with a remark on how Edward VIII had abdicated out of duty to his country. Seretse replied that Edward had been following the advice of the constitutional representatives of his people, not ignoring them. Seretse concluded by stating that all the events of the previous three or four years concerning him and his wife could only be explained by 'intervention by the Union of South Africa.'

Salisbury then spoke, appealing to Seretse to forget the past in Bechuanaland, and concentrate instead on the future in Jamaica! Seretse retorted that 'that there were many Jamaicans who would welcome the Jamaican post.'

Ismay appeared to go along with Seretse's explanation of past events, saying that one only had to look at the map of southern Africa to see the 'wider considerations' of the case. This produced the response from Seretse that if Britain gave way to the Union of South Africa, 'on a matter like this, there would be no end to appeasement. White South Africans would be encouraged in their repressive policies, and race relations would deteriorate even more quickly.'

Finding Salisbury completely unbending, Seretse reverted to his position as summed up in the August 1950 secret Aide-Memoire between him and Tshekedi: 'As he had frequently indicated, he was prepared to renounce his claim to the chieftainship, but he must insist on retaining full liberty to take part in the political life of his tribe.' Salisbury snapped back that that was *impracticable* and that there was now 'no alternative except to make his exclusion from the chieftainship permanent and final.'

At this point Ismay intervened on a note of surprise. He said that he had never been made aware of Seretse's readiness to renounce chieftainship for citizenship. At Ismay's suggestion, the meeting broke for 15 minutes for Ismay to consult with the C.R.O. officials whom he now realized had been keeping him in the dark. We do not now what was said, but Ismay remained silent for the rest of the meeting.

The meeting resumed. Salisbury made a terse announcement that 'renunciation but retention of full political liberty was unacceptable.' He regretted that 'Mr. Khama had not seen his way to accept the proposals put before him,' and he must now say the decision to bar Seretse and his children from the chieftainship was now permanent. The meeting was adjourned.

Salisbury drafted a minute to the Prime Minister immediately after the meeting, recording his impression that Seretse had been 'bitter and obdurate.' The phrase was omitted when the minute was typed by the C.R.O. Salisbury then walked in to a pre-arranged press conference at 5 pm, to announce Seretse's permanent exclusion from chieftainship. One of the 18 journalists present, Goold-Adams of The Economist, was the son of a former B.P. Resident Commissioner.75 Seretse and Ruth returned home to Chipstead. Ruth Khama later recalled: 'Seretse ... was most upset at the Tory Government's decision. He came home and buried
his face in his hands and said, "To think that I can never go home again. Never, ever." 76

Seretse and Tshekedi had been crushed between the Scylla of the Socialists and the Charybdis of the Conservatives. The invocation of their very names aroused guilt feelings about political morality among British politicians for years to come. As late as 1963-64 backbenchers were shouting 'Seretse' and 'Tshekedi' in accusation against each other in the Westminster parliament.

In colonial Botswana the emergence of a 'third party' with Pan-Africanist and liberal democratic ideas, was to be the beginning of an elite nationalist movement. But mass exasperation among the Bangwato at the irrationality of British rule was first to grow into the very disruption which had been used as the pretext for excluding Seretse from power.

Chapter 6
EXILE
1952-56

The Conservative Party government's decision that 'their predecessor's refusal to recognize Seretse must be confirmed and made permanent and final' was announced in the Lords and Commons on March 27th, 1952. British press comment was at first divided. The Times thought the British government's decision on Seretse 'definite', but added that the problem of the 'Bamangwato' still continued 'with all its echoes in wider Africa.' The Manchester Guardian said the decision would shock all liberals in Britain and give offence to millions in Africa. The Birmingham Post agreed that, 'for the sake of peace and quiet in Bechuanaland (which it may not bring about) the Government has stirred up immense resentment in many parts of the Commonwealth, and gone some way to undermine the partnership between black and white on which the Commonwealth's cohesion depends.' The Scotsman, the Liverpool Post and the News Chronicle concluded that the Conservatives were no better than Labour in treating Seretse badly. The Daily Telegraph and Daily Graphic congratulated the Conservative government on its wisdom and courage.

It was only the ultra-Tory Daily Express which caught the growing popular mood among the British public, regardless of political affiliation: it attacked Salisbury's decision as 'a bad deed which should arouse shame and anger throughout the country." Lord Beaverbrook, the Canadian press baron who owned Express newspapers, took up the cause of Seretse and Ruth, as an echo of the cause of Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson which he had supported 16 years earlier. A flood of letters from the British public and British subjects overseas began to pour into Lord Salisbury's office. Of the 140 odd still preserved in C.R.O. files, a mere dozen were either hostile or indifferent to Seretse's cause. The sentiments of Seretse's supporters are reflected in the following statements:
- British sense of fair play has been outraged;
- The Tories were not elected to continue the bad policies of the stupid Socialists;
- Freedom! My foot, where is it? You're another Mussolini and not fit for your job!;
- To Hell with Dr Malan;
- I am afraid our 'bossing' days are over, and we must wake up;

- The bilge you people put out about the Commonwealth being a family of nations;
- No wonder we are hated by most of the world;
- Pleasing a crowd of semi-Nazi Dutchmen is not only foolish but suicidal;
- I have always previously voted Conservative, but my faith is broken.
Reports were received that people were resigning from the Conservative Party over the issue in more than one constituency.
A number of critics pointed to the 'violation of justice and human rights.' They were referring to Article 13 of the 1950 Universal Declaration of Human Rights - the right of freedom of movement within one's own country, and to be able to leave or return to it. However, the United Kingdom, while subscribing to the Declaration, had crossed its fingers and toes with an exclusion clause for its colonies and protectorates. (The C.R.O. was happier with the more dilute European Convention on Human Rights currently being negotiated in 1952-53.)

One of the dozen letters hostile or indifferent to Seretse was from a black African objecting to racially mixed marriages. The C.R.O. minute on the side reads: 'An African who approves HMG's policy in Bechuanaland!' Two others said: 'We don't want an African St. Seretse'; and 'handle this man firmly!' Some of the dozen appeared to be from white South Africans, but none approached this one in eccentricity:

May the good God Bless Dr Malan - all his Cabinet. He, like Hitler is trying to cleanse God's beautiful world, while the filthy British are doing everything they can to foul God's beauty ... the devil will rule, - Britain will be brought to nought in one Hour. Lord Salisbury Viscount Stansgate should come out here - see the Cursed Niggers En Mass.

[signed] A. Gleason (Miss)

Many of the letters were from organizations in Britain and abroad. Foreign organizations writing in support of Seretse included the African National Congress of South Africa - despite both its president and treasurer, James Moroka and S.M. Molema, being in-laws and close friends of Tshekedi. Others, many of them forwarded by the Seretse Khama Fighting Committee, included: the Kingston & St. Andrew's Taxpayers of Jamaica, the Connolly Association of Irish in London, the Coloured Republicans Assembly of Trinidad, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, the Kenya African Union, and the South African Indian Congress.

It was two letters sent to Churchill and his deputy Anthony Eden which received the most attention. A 24-year-old American ex-soldier being trained as a teacher at the University of Cincinnati addressed his plea to Churchill:

I ask you sincerely, how can I defend this action of the 'Mother of Democracy', when asked by my eager and interested young students to explain it? ... England
has betrayed in part my respect for her as a nation ... do not minimize or shrug off
the importance of the 'Seretse affair' ... it threatens the very groundwork and
fundamental theories ... from which the United States also derived its democratic
principles.4
Eden meanwhile was approached by the upper class opera, ballet and theatrical
designer Oliver Messel, who was 'wildly distressed' at the 'injustice' shown
Seretse Khama. Describing himself as 'a staunch Conservative supporter,' Messel
criticized 'weakly pandering to the policy of South African colour
discrimination.'5
Among British organizations, the body that had to be given most credence was the
British Council of Churches, which raised the issue of Seretse Khama at length in
a Belfast meeting. A delegation led in person by the Archbishop of Canterbury,
Dr Geoffrey Fisher, eventually arrived at the C.R.O. on May 9th. Salisbury was
put to pains to answer five detailed points, each one being turned to justify the
government's action. The delegates were told that the 'tribe' threatened to
'collapse' if Seretse returned. That he 'might in time be allowed back, first for
visits.' But he was unlikely ever to return home for good because of 'his European
tastes.'6
The delegation of seven Bangwato leaders led by Keaboka Kgamane arrived at
London's Heathrow airport on April 9th. Lord Salisbury, who had had plenty of
advance warning of their arrival, kept them waiting for two weeks for an
interview. He wished to impress on them their insignificance and the futility of
their mission.
The 'Keaboka crowd' visited Seretse at Chipstead soon enough, but Seretse had
little contact with them thereafter. What neither the press, nor the Bangwato at
home, realized was how much the delegates affronted Seretse by pressing him to
divorce his wife and renounce his child. This 'simple' scheme to get Seretse back
as kgosi had been hatched between Keaboka, Sobhuza of Swaziland, and Walter
Pela of Johannesburg. It apparently had the support of other chiefs in the B.P.,
who realized that even without his wife Seretse as a chief would incur the
displeasure of the South African government. But it would be better, for the
internal peace and stability of the B.P., to 'risk a real upset with the Union' and
have Seretse back.7
The Seretse Khama Campaign Committee (former Seretse Khama Fighting
Committee) set about campaigning on Seretse's behalf. But Seretse himself held
back from public involvement, to give the Bangwato delegates a chance to make
their case.

It was not until April 15th that he appeared at a protest rally, in London's Caxton
Hall. The meeting was held by a recently formed group known as Racial Unity,
which included Clement Attlee's sister among its leaders. Seretse requested that
the meeting concentrate on Bechuanaland's future rather than himself, but he
agreed to speak.8 The meeting was chaired by the president of the Women's
Liberal Federation. Seretse was preceded as a speaker by his Gold Coaster
(Ghanaian) friend Joe Appiah, who was to win fame a year later when he married
the daughter of the former Labour minister Sir Stafford Cripps.9 With the
'Keaboka crowd' sitting behind the speakers, obliged to remain silent until they had seen Salisbury, Seretse spoke off the cuff, displaying characteristic humour: I am not bitter, but I am frustrated, because I am compelled to live here and do absolutely nothing ... I have not yet been able to find out what I have done wrong. I have been told that my marriage is contrary to native custom, but I can prove that it is not. I find it difficult, for all my Oxford training, to understand the people I have been dealing with - even though some of them have been to Oxford. Perhaps they were at a different college. We still in Bechuanaland regard ourselves as British and we still have a great deal of confidence in British justice, fair play and decency. Don't destroy it by allowing your Government to carry out this unjust decision without a protest from you. After the seven Bangwato delegates, whom the C.R.O. dismissed as mere 'country hayseeds,' had seen Salisbury and received no satisfaction, Seretse felt freer to speak. On May 2nd, the Seretse Khama Campaign Committee arranged a meeting in a London hall, at which both Seretse and an elderly Mongwato delegate, Mongwaketse Mathangwane, spoke. " Seretse also attended one of the committee meetings of the Campaign Committee, possibly that of May 7th, in the campaign's headquarters at 45 Brondesbury Villas, West London the house of its secretary Billy Strachan, a Briton of African ancestry. On May 10th Seretse attended a prestigious meeting in the Anti-Slavery Society's Dennison House. Mathangwane and the others spoke, threatening to renew the Bangwato boycott of colonial administration back home. Fenner Brockway, the left-wing Labour M.P. and veteran campaigner against colonialism, described Seretse's banishment as an intolerable crime against humanity, an outrage against democracy, and a blow to the development of Bechuanaland. By refusing to accept Seretse and his marriage, Britain had missed the chance to show South Africa an alternative future of racial equality. Canon John Collins, the campaigning cleric otherwise associated with Tshekedi, attacked South Africa's 'master race' threat to world peace. An account in the Manchester Guardian continues: Seretse, when he came to speak himself, was dryly ironic in his comments on the attitude of both the Labour and Conservative parties. From his experience it seemed that the colonial peoples were being used only as play-things - or rather, as sticks with which to beat political opponents. The Socialists could use him to knock the Conservatives and vice-versa. His speech was nicely detached ... but there was something like bitterness in the beginning of his speech last night, when he said that 'these "black and ignorant" men [referring to the Bangwato delegates] know their own people
better than the noble person sitting in Whitehall [Lord Salisbury], who would probably [have] never met a black man until he met Seretse Khama.' 12

On the next night Seretse Khama went to a meeting in Birmingham Town Hall, attended by 2 000 people, which the Birmingham Post incorrectly guessed was 'the biggest audience of his life.' The meeting was organized by the Midlands branch of the United Nations Association. The chairman was Daniel Lipson, the former M.P. who had been one of the British government's observers sent to Bechuanaland in 1951. Also on the platform together with Seretse sat Ruth Khama and three Bangwato delegates.

Seretse told the crowd that he and the Bangwato had lost faith in the British government because they had been treated so contemptuously. He obliquely contrasted this with Britain's craven dependence on South Africa: 'We are coloured and our country is very small and cannot make a military contribution to the Western world.' Turning upside-down Ismay's conceit about sacrificing one man for a million, Seretse 'asked whether the British government was prepared to sacrifice the friendship of 60 000 000 Africans for the doubtful friendship of Dr Malan.' As for himself,

I have been here two or three years now and during that time I have been a very good boy. But where has it got me?
If it is true, as it has been said, that I am not fit to rule, that I am irresponsible, how can I hope to serve ably and properly the Jamaican people? If I am fit to be the assistant [to the] governor of Jamaica, I think I am more fit to be the ruler of my own people. 13

There was also wide publicity given in the next day's newspapers to a sermon given in St Paul's Cathedral by Rev Dr Marcus James from Jamaica.

He had been invited to preach, by Canon Collins of the cathedral, on behalf of a new movement called Christian Action. James compared Malan 'the world's high priest of racial hate' - with Hitler. He called on Christians to crusade against 'racial idolatory', rather than against communism. 14

There was a new spirit of public sentiment in Britain against racialism at home and colonialism overseas. The wider implications of the recent war against fascism had begun to sink in. Seretse and Ruth Khama were a human issue that brought home to the British public the implications of apartheid in Africa and the presence of increasing numbers of black people in Britain. By 1952 there was another related colonial issue that attracted the attention of the press and humanitarian bodies - the impending Central African Federation, to consist of Northern Rhodesia (later Zambia) and Nyasaland (later Malawi) under the domination of the white settlers of Southern Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe). Protest was particularly strong in Scotland, where the Scottish churches regarded Nyasaland as their fief. For a time protests over the two issues, Seretse Khama and the Central African Federation, ran hand in hand. Much of the protest was orchestrated by the Colonial Bureau of the Fabian Society, and a new political pressure group and information service in London called the Africa Bureau. The
Africa Bureau, however, was run by Michael Scott and old friends of Tshekedi, who stood out against exclusive support for Seretse Khama.15

Cabinet at No. 10 Downing Street discussed Seretse Khama's speaking in public. It decided not to withdraw his allowance for breaking its terms of political silence, for fear of being 'accused of muzzling free speech and persecuting Seretse.' No doubt such hints were somehow communicated to Seretse, who seems to have quietened down again quite quickly. He remained remarkably silent during and after dramatic events back home in Serowe during June 1952. By July the Seretse Khama Campaign Committee was acknowledging that Seretse had only attended one of their committee meetings.

A minute written by a C.R.O. official in May 1952 observed that 'Seretse is not the instigator, but is a pawn in the hands of the "woolly-woollies".' The minute raised the question of 'any action which the C.R.O. could properly take to damp down agitation in the U.K. in favour of Seretse. The Seretse Khama Campaign Committee in particular frightened the British government because of its Communist Party connections. Its secretary Billy Strachan was in later years referred to as a 'veteran C.P. hack' (i.e. journalist). It was also noticeable that it was the Communist Party newspaper, the Daily Worker, which gave the committee the most plentiful publicity.

One may legitimately speculate about the role of British government agencies in setting up the alternative to the Seretse Khama Campaign Committee. Such a committee was to appear in July 1952. The security services may have been pursuing the issue for some time. Two years earlier Sir Percy Sillitoe the head of MI5, the security service for Britain and the empire, had been alerted to Seretse's possible communist connections by Tshekedi's lawyer Douglas Buchanan.6

On Wednesday, May 21st, the 'Keaboka crowd' of Bangwato delegates arrived back from England in Serowe, empty-handed. On Friday, May 23rd, the British government issued an Order-in-Council barring both Seretse Khama and Tshekedi Khama, together with their children, from ever succeeding to the chieftainship of the Bangwato. On Sunday, June 1st, the Serowe kgotla broke into a bloody riot of people against vehicles, and stones against teargas. Three police constables, brought in to join the colonial emergency forces from Basutoland, were stoned to death. Keaboka and others were arrested and subsequently tried and imprisoned.7

The Bangwato had rioted because they had been deprived of Seretse, giving the lie to the official idea that his return would lead to unrest. But the colonial authorities tried to make the best of the situation, now that the 'Keaboka crowd' was in jail, to get Rasebolai Kgamane elected in kgotla as the new kgosi. Rasebolai was a sober, competent administrator, who had long been Tshekedi's chief lieutenant. In order to consolidate pro-Tshekedi headmen behind Rasebolai, Tshekedi was allowed back as a private citizen into the Bangwato Reserve from August 1952.

The crescendo of violence appears to have taken the Bangwato aback as much as anyone else, and the riots ended as quickly as they had begun. The Bangwato
Reserve settled down to a prolonged period of sullen unrest. The colonial regime reciprocated by withdrawing the emergency forces and the more belligerent local colonial officials. A prestigious colonial administrator with Tanganyika experience, John Millard, was appointed to head a new regime as the senior district officer (equivalent to provincial commissioner) based at Francistown, responsible for the northern Protectorate.  

The new Resident Commissioner at Mafikeng, Forbes Mackenzie, though one of the confrontational school, now concentrated on turning C.R.O. attention to the appalling economic neglect under which the B.P. was suffering. The current state of the Protectorate was aptly summed up in the title of an article on Bechuanaland appearing in a religious journal in October 1952 - 'Bechuanaland: a country without a future.' The author, a liberal white woman from South Africa, could only see a meaningful future for Bechuanaland as part of the Central African Federation - as she found the B.P. so different in spirit from the Union of South Africa.  

The rising star of Central African politics, Roy Welensky, invited the Africans and Europeans of the Bechuanaland Protectorate to join the Federation during a debate of July 1952 in the Northern Rhodesian legislative council. There was, however, a hint of threat as well as promise, as almost in the same breath he warned Africans within Northern Rhodesia that if they did not participate in the Federation they would 'disappear' like the Red Indians of America.  

The South African government had anticipated the Central African bid for Bechuanaland by renewing its own bid for all three High Commission Territories, including Bechuanaland. Tom Driberg raised the question of South African claims to the territories by a question in the Westminster parliament of November 1951. In reply, Prime Minister Churchill reiterated the well-known rubric of British policy on transfer of the High Commission Territories to the Union of South Africa: not 'until their inhabitants had been consulted and until the United Kingdom Parliament had been given an opportunity of expressing its views.' There was no mention of either the inhabitants or the U.K. parliament having to give their consent, but the more this formula was repeated the more their consent was implied along with consultation.  

The British and South African governments agreed to clear the air by publishing their own versions of all their official correspondence on the High Commission Territories since the year 1909. Then suddenly at the last moment, in November 1952, D.D. Forsyth in South Africa begged the British not to publish any correspondence with Southern Rhodesia or with South Africa after 1939. That was the year from which Malan wanted to pick up the South African position, excluding any compromises of and by the Smuts government between 1939 and 1948. The British agreed not to publish their version of events after 1939 for the time being; and effectively compromised the South Africans from pursuing their new bid for the High Commission Territories. Sleeping dogs were allowed to lie. When Anthony Sillery, in his new guise as an Oxford academic, proposed to do a
scholarly study of the High Commission Territories 'question', the C.R.O. stamped on his proposal good and hard. Instead he was directed into the study of B.P. administration in the late nineteenth century. The writing task of a semi-official history of the High Commission Territories issue was left instead to a bland little study by Lord Hailey, compiler of the Africa Survey.2’ Seretse's supporters in Britain combined support for him with a campaign of opposition to South Africa's bid to take over the High Commission Territories. Michael Scott at the Africa Bureau wrote to Tshekedi in July 1952 about the formation of a new Council for the Defence of Seretse Khama and the Protectorates, which would include all political parties except the communists. Scott claimed that this would clear up the confusion of existing committees. The old Seretse Khama Campaign Committee had developed a new offshoot called the Bamangwato People's Defence Fund, to raise funds for the legal defence of the 'Keaboka crowd'. There was also not only Racial Unity but also the new body founded by Canon Collins called Christian Action. All of these, claimed Scott, were compromising political support for Seretse (and Tshekedi) Khama by associating themselves with Keaboka and the murderous rioters of Serowe.
Seretse stuck to his pledge to the C.R.O. not to make press comments on events in Bechuanaland. But he must have found it particularly galling that Walter Pela, the same man who had set off the Tiger Kloof strike in 1939, had now emerged in London as the self-appointed spokesman of the Bangwato. Pela put about the entirely baseless story in the press that Seretse was going to organize resistance to British rule from a base in Swaziland.22
There was now a new voice for the Bangwato, which emerged at Serowe in June immediately after and in reaction to the bloody kgotla riot - the Bamangwato National Congress. The B.N.C., modelled on the African National Congresses of neighbouring countries, was the mouthpiece of the 'third party' of younger intelligentsia. They supported Seretse Khama, and were opposed to both Keaboka and Tshekedi. The B.N.C. included such later prominent politicians as K.T. Motsete, M.P. K. Nwako and the Koma brothers, and was led by L.D. Raditladi. The Bamangwato National Congress never developed much of a political programme. It made some mark in the latter half of 1952, when it put forward the name of Oratile Ratshosa, to be acting kgosi until her younger halfbrother Seretse could return. Queens were in vogue: Britain now had one, Elizabeth II, who had succeeded on the death of her father in February 1952. The B.N.C., however, had little internal coherence or persistence and failed to garner mass support. Like other bodies founded before and afterwards by L.D. Raditladi, it soon faded away - at least for six years until 1958, when Raditladi founded a successor party with a wider national ambit called the Bechuanaland Protectorate Federal Party.23
In London the Council for the Defence of Seretse Khama and the Protectorates held its first formal meeting after the re-assembly of the Westminster parliament in September 1952. Most of its members were Members of Parliament. Its chairman was the anti-colonial Labour M.P. Fenner Brockway, who had been born the son of an L.M.S. missionary in India. Its vice-chairman was the Liberal
M.P. Jo Grimond, while its most prominent Conservative supporters were Lords Hailsham (Quintin Hogg) and Boyd Orr. Three members, all Labour M.P.s, were particularly keen advocates of Seretse and Ruth - Reggie Sorenson, Jenny Lee and Anthony Wedgwood-Benn (Tony Benn). Learie Constantine was recruited from the superceded Seretse Khama Campaign Committee, together with Seretse's friends, the sprinter Macdonald Bailey, Joe Appiah and Charles Njonjo. Other listed supporters of distinction include Kingsley Martin and the philosopher Bertrand Russell, Lady Megan Lloyd George, the painter Augustus John, the playwright Christopher Fry and the novelist Sir Compton Mackenzie, the actors Alec Guinness and Michael Redgrave and the more notably 'political' leading actress Dame Sybil Thorndike. Seretse and Ruth were photographed with the main members of the council at the Palace of Westminster. But the council seems to have been little more than a parliamentary lobby group during 1952-53. The issue of Seretse Khama seems to have run out of steam as far as the British press was concerned by the end of September 1952. The C.R.O. reported, much to its own satisfaction, that 'there is nothing to show yet that he is actively connected with the new council.' But Seretse did not keep entirely quiet. He addressed meetings such as his local Redhill branch of the United Nations Association. But he talked about the development prospects of Bechuanaland in general, and took care not to arouse controversy about his own case.24

The biggest fear for 'our main policy' on the part of the C.R.O. was the threat of Seretse's half-sister Oratile being nominated by the Bangwato as regent. The colonial authorities in Bechuanaland were obliged to put across a concerted campaign of innuendo against her - emphasizing her unsuitability because she was a woman, because she was the widow of a Ratshosa, and because she was obviously only a stop-gap for Seretse. The Marquess of Salisbury was replaced as Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations by Viscount Swinton (Philip Cunliffe-Lister) in December 1952. Satisfactory settlement of 'Bamangwato affairs' was his first priority. The major task in sight was getting Rasebolai nominated by the Bangwato as their kgosi. On his very first day in office, Swinton received a request from Brockway to receive a delegation of the Council for the Defence of Seretse Khama and the Protectorates on 'Bamangwato affairs'. Swinton managed to put off seeing Brockway's delegation for two whole months. When he received it he had mugged up on C.R.O. briefing notes, and was able to talk about 'these unfortunate people, torn and distraught for nearly three years by the irresponsible action of a youth and a tragic controversy within their ruling house. It is significant that the Council for the Defence of Seretse Khama on this occasion asked for Seretse's return home *at an early date as private individual" as an alternative to his eventual return home as chief. Swinton said that his government's decision on Seretse's exile was final and unchangeable.25 But there is no doubt that the alternatives were posed with Seretse's consent. His ambiguity about becoming kgosi was as strong as ever, and probably stronger. It was
therefore ironic that at this moment he should be presented with a child who could
legitimately be heir to the bogosi of the Bangwato.
On February 27th, 1953, Ruth Khama gave birth to a son. The birth of
a male heir reinforced support for Seretse in Serowe, just at the time when the
British had hopes of persuading the Bangwato to accept the childless Rasebolai as
their kgosi.
The boy was named 'Seretse' after his father, 'Ian' as a name from the Williams
family which also had the virtue of being Scottish, and 'Khama' after his
grandfather. The last name was added as another first name, at the specific request
of Bangwato elders who cabled from Serowe. This was so that the boy when he
became kgosi could be titled Khama IV, as the symbolic successor to the great
Khama III. Hence the child bore the somewhat repetitive-sounding name, Seretse
Khama Ian Khama, the second 'Khama' being the surname.
In March 1953 Fenner Brockway held a press conference to publicize a nation-
wide petition in Britain for Seretse Khama's return to Bechuanaland as chief of
the Bangwato. (The first signatures on the petition had in fact been collected by
the C.D.S.K. & P. the previous September.) Seretse spoke briefly to the press in a
committee room of the House of Commons. He explained the hereditary nature of
Bangwato bogosi, and added: 'So long as it is the desire of the tribe that I should
be chief - and information from Bechuanaland indicates that this is so - I am ready
to serve them to the best of my capacity.'26
The petition for Seretse's return as chief, however, was not notably successful. It
collected less than 11 000 signatures over the course of the next year. The Council
for the Defence of Seretse Khama and the Protectorates also published a
pamphlet, but Seretse's case had dwindled as a big public issue. Support of
Seretse, led by Fenner Brockway, continued as an issue among Labour backbench
M.P.s, conducted as much against their own frontbenchers as against the
government.27
The British government hoped that the Bangwato would catch some of the
coronation fever gripping Britain, before the crowning of Queen Elizabeth II on
June 2nd, 1953. But after a kgotla meeting of May 7th the Bangwato again
refused to nominate Rasebolai, or any one else other than Seretse, as kgosi. On
May 13th, therefore, Swinton announced the appointment of Rasebolai Kgamane
as 'Native Authority' of the Bangwato, giving him all the legal powers of colonial
chieftainship without his assuming the leopard skin of bogosi. The announcement
was made by Swinton, over the protests of Stansgate and Hailsham and others, in
the House of Lords.
On May 22nd the House of Commons debated the issue on a motion initiated by
the Labour M.P. Eirene White. It was a characteristic Commons debate of the
type which gave both encouragement and frustration to Seretse, who often sat in
the visitors' gallery. By May 1953 there was remarkable silence about
'Bamangwato affairs' on the Tory backbenches. It was left to Labour
backbenchers to make their mark.
The maverick libertarian Sir Richard Acland began by warning the whites
of Africa that they were doomed to disaster by all the rules of Christ, Freud and Marx. Nigel Nicholson, son of the novelist Vita Sackville-West, stood up to note that the Commons had expended 20 hours and 450 columns of the Hansard record of debates on Bechuanaland. Jennie Lee, wife of the former Labour frontbencher Aneurin Bevan, pointed out that the Labour frontbench had absented themselves from the debate in shame. Michael Foot underlined the immorality of both Labourites and Conservatives towards both Seretse and Tsekhedi Khama. Fenner Brockway spoke of his vision of a ‘future [human] race ... from the intermingling of peoples and colours.’ and of the historical importance of the acceptance of the marriage by Bangwato traditionalists. Jennie Lee added that human beings would always fight injustice, because they held values and principles above mere material interests.

After trying his bid for the High Commission Territories, Prime Minister Malan of South Africa attempted to spread South African influence further afield. In January 1953 he proposed that the colonial powers adopt an ‘African Charter’ - to bolster white settlement in Africa and to preserve ‘indigenous peoples’ from outside contacts. In effect, a form of greater apartheid over the whole continent. The danger, as Malan saw it, was twofold: the path towards black majority rule being pioneered in the Gold Coast (later Ghana) of West Africa, and the promise of ‘multi-racialism’ in the Central Africa Federation. Behind both lay the guilt-laden nightmare of white dispossession and hellish punishment called communism.

The ‘multi-racial’ ideal of rule by white and black partnership was being put forward in the Rhodesias by the white liberals of the Capricorn Africa Society. The society adopted the zebra as its emblem, and attempted to recruit Tsekhedi Khama as a prize catch. Tsekhedi, however, clearly and correctly saw that the proposed restrictions on ‘uncivilized’ Africans becoming full citizens would alienate ‘thinking black people’.

Potentially far more alarming was the spirit of Pan-Africanism being engendered abroad among blacks by the example of Kwame Nkrumah’s leadership on the Gold Coast. A confidential memorandum by Canada’s High Commissioner in Pretoria, which reached the C.R.O. at the end of 1952, warned of ‘buoyant and belligerent African nationalism or racism.’ By mid-1954 Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party was rumoured to be setting up a branch in the Union of South Africa or in Basutoland. The South African government was said to fear ‘the Gold Coast virus’ as ‘at least as great a menace as Communism.

In Bechuanaland, Tsekhedi Khama stepped up his agitation for the territory to have its own legislative council, like those in other British African colonies. Tsekhedi was one of the equal number of African and European (settler) representatives on the B.P.’s Joint Advisory Council, which he and others wished to see upgraded into a legislative council with the power to initiate, debate and pass laws. Any such demands for constitutional development were ignored by Britain, which wanted to avoid a row with South Africa over the future of the High Commission Territories. As it turned out, Malan was more concerned by the renewed invitation to Bechuanaland to join the Central African Federation.
The British government even felt it necessary to warn off the South African government. On April 13th, 1954, Churchill made a statement in the House of Commons dissuading 'Dr Malan and his Government' from 'needlessly' bidding for transfer of the High Commission Territories. This has generally come to be seen as the key moment in constitutional history when South Africa's bid to get Britain to hand over Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland finally failed.

By 1955, Tshekedi Khama published a pamphlet through the Africa Bureau in London, laying out Bechuanaland's alternatives for the future. He pressed the British government to make a decision as to whether Bechuanaland would become a separate state like Nigeria or Uganda, or whether it would become 'an African Territory within a neighbouring state.' At least until the end of 1955, and possibly until the end of 1960, the preferred alternative of the leading members of the J.A.C. seems to have been for Bechuanaland to join the Central African Federation."

For three or four years the relationship between Seretse and Tshekedi remained in suspended animation. Seretse, never a conscientious letterwriter to anyone but his wife, probably never wrote to Tshekedi. There is only one suggestion of communication between the two men in Tshekedi Khama's copious archives. It was an impish remark by Seretse passed on through his friend Canon Collins in July 1954. Collins had seen Seretse in London, and told him that he would meet Tshekedi when he made a visit to Johannesburg. Seretse asked Collins to pass on his greetings to his uncle - and to ask if Tshekedi was looking after Seretse's cattle as well as he was looking after his own.

This 'either sarcastic or ignorant' barb made Tshekedi furious. As far as Tshekedi was concerned, he had handed over all responsibility for Seretse's cattle to Peto Sekgoma - Seretse's agent and Tshekedi's bitterest enemy. Peto was still in prison, sentenced for public violence as one of the Serowe rioters, but 'associates' including the lawyer Fraenkel were looking after Seretse's interests for him. There was an on-going dispute between Tshekedi and Seretse's 'associates' over livestock at Gogwane on the Nata River. Seretse approached the C.R.O. over the matter in May 1954. The herders at Gogwane were Seretse's retainers, the Makame brothers, but the grazing at Gogwane had been allocated to Tshekedi. The matter was taken up by Fraenkel in Bechuanaland.

It was presumably Fraenkel who sold 92 of Seretse's cattle between June and August 1954, to cover his fees. Peto then assumed full responsibility when he was released from prison in September 1954, and the issue became a hot one, continuing into 1955. The colonial authorities attributed the whole dispute to Peto's deliberate baiting of both Tshekedi and themselves.4
branch line of British Railways' southern region nearby, enabling them to go quickly up to London or to see Ruth's parents in Blackheath by electric train. The Khamas settled into local social life, with its sports facilities and saloon bars. Jacqueline attended a local nursery school, and eventually went to primary school. Seretse played cricket and tennis, wore a tweed jacket, smoked endless cigarettes and conversed amiably and animatedly over pints of beer. The C.R.O. heard with concern about bouts of depressed drinking, but he remained physically fit and infectiously humorous. Slow to anger, he shrugged off periodic silly rumours of impending divorce as wishful thinking in southern Africa or London. Their suburban neighbours were in general very friendly, despite the fact that the house had a stream of visitors from further afield - including West Indians, Africans, Indians, Arabs and Americans. Seretse was a genial host but not a proficient handyman-householder. When frozen water pipes burst during one winter, he confidently went into the the loft to fix them. The next thing Ruth Khama heard was a crash, as two legs burst through the bathroom ceiling and dangled above her. She also recalls his antics in passing off a rubber-nibbed pen, acquired from a joke shop, on other people including his father-in-law.35 In December 1953 Seretse was joined in British exile by a second highly educated king from Africa, Kabaka Mutesa II alias 'Freddie'. The Kabaka had been exiled from his kingdom of Buganda, part of the British colony of Uganda, for standing on his dignity rather than accepting colonial dictates as a loyal subject. A more extravagant and colourful character than Seretse, he played up his upper class English background of Eton and the Guards. 'Freddie' and his wife nonetheless became firm friends of Seretse's and Ruth's. Their stories became intertwined in the minds of newspaper readers, so that Seretse and 'Freddie' are still confused in the public memory of Britain. (Just as Ruth Khama is often confused in people's memories with Peggy Appiah.) Lady Longford (Elizabeth Pakenham), in her memoirs, for example, refers to 'Seretse Khama of Uganda. Among other friends at this time perhaps the most notable were Tony and Caroline Benn, who had recently bought a house in Holland Park Avenue, on the north side of Campden Hill where Seretse and Ruth had briefly lived at the time of their marriage in 1948. Tony Benn felt a strong emotional kinship with Seretse, as he explained to the Commons in August 1956, because 'he wants to be a chief and I do not want to be a chief.' Tony Benn wanted the right not to succeed his father as Lord Stansgate in the Lords, but to remain plain Mr. Benn in the Commons. Benn had become treasurer for Brockway's Movement for Colonial Freedom, launched in March 1954, with a much bigger agenda than the previous Council for the Defence of Seretse Khama and the Protectorates. Benn's wife Caroline, an American, got on particularly well with Ruth. They both smoked cigarettes in long cigarette-holders that matched the colour of their clothes. At four in the morning, after a long night's discussion, they concluded that neither of them really enjoyed smoking and that it was just a social affectation. They made the mutual pledge never to smoke again without the other's permission. They both still keep to that pledge.36
Ruth and Seretse were assisted in Addiscombe by a Spanish au pair nanny, Yvonne Hampas, who enabled them to periodically escape the constraints of two small children in the house. They also took Jackie and Ian around with them by car, or by train into the centre of London. Lady Longford, herself a member of the Africa Bureau executive, recalls lunching with the Khamas and their children in the Longfords' Chelsea house. The Longfords learnt that Ruth had, as a child refugee from the blitz, attended classes in their Sussex country home at the beginning of the Second World War.37

In December 1954 Seretse's annual allowance from the C.R.O. was increased from £1 100 to £1 375 per annum, subject to tax. It transpired that Seretse had never registered for tax. He pointed out that he was still technically a student. It may also have been partly a political gesture as well as an astute financial move. Seretse's law studies became more and more sporadic. He nurtured vague plans of entering a law partnership as a barrister somewhere in Africa, possibly in Nigeria. As late as September 1956 he was still talking of taking Bar exams that December.

People at Serowe never gave up hope of Seretse's eventual return. They continued to send him letters of support. 'Native Authority' Rasebolai Kgamane and the colonial authorities never ceased to be frustrated by periodic rumours of Seretse's return.

Keaboka, Peto Sekgoma and nine other Bangwato leaders convicted of public violence after the kgotla riot of June 1952 were released from prison in September 1954. A quaintly worded petition to Queen Elizabeth was forwarded in that month from Bangwato elders, begging for Seretse's return. Renewed agitation was apparently nipped in the bud by Rasebolai, who arrested and fined 17 Bangwato who had convened an illegal public meeting in order to meet two lawyers from South Africa. But rumours of Seretse's impending return grew more insistent.38

Fenner Brockway raised the issue of the 'gross denial of human rights' to Seretse Khama, at the annual conference of the Labour Party in September 1954. The five-year mark of Seretse's exile was approaching: the period originally decreed by the Labour government in March 1950 for review of the sentence. The platform of the Labour Party conference replied that it would investigate and report back.

As a result of Brockway's initiative, the Labour Party sent its Commonwealth and Imperial liaison officer, the journalist John Hatch, to consult with the C.R.O. at the beginning of November 1954. Hatch told old Baxter of the C.R.O. about his party's 'very guilty conscience about Seretse.' Baxter told him that it would be a long time before Seretse could return even as a private citizen, and that Seretse could never return as chief. Baxter claimed that 'reinstatement in a position of authority, on the Union's doorstep, of an African with a white wife and half-breed family would unite and inflame against us all the white population of the Union.' But his main argument to the Labour Party representative was that the split between Tshekedi and Seretse, as evidenced by the current dispute over Gogwane, was irreconcilable.
Hatch came back to the C.R.O. after Labour's defeat in the April 1955 general election. He proposed to visit Bechuanaland in May to review the situation. The C.R.O. made every effort to dissuade Hatch, and then reluctantly went along with his plans. Two years earlier the C.R.O. had explored legal ways to stop British citizens, notably John Stonehouse M.P., from visiting the High Commission Territories; it had also successfully diverted the investigative journalist Basil Davidson from Bechuanaland into looking at Swaziland instead.

Seretse himself was enthusiastic about Hatch's forthcoming visit. A private letter saying this was soon being mysteriously passed from hand to hand in the troubled Bokalaka sub-district of the Bangwato Reserve. John Millard, the colonial administrator now in charge of the northern B.P., expressed his misgivings about Hatch's visit: '... at last a European ... who comes to talk with them after talking with Seretse himself - in fact almost John the Baptist.'

Hatch's visit was to prove that Tshekedi was by no means as irreconcilable as the C.R.O. had made out. Hatch entered the country by train from Bulawayo, by chance travelling with Resident Commissioner Forbes Mackenzie, whom he claimed was 'about 6ft 7in' tall. Hatch then stayed at Francistown with Millard, 'a slight, pleasant brown-faced man'. Millard drove Hatch to Serowe through Tonota, on the Shashe River, where Millard carefully shepherded him through meetings with Bangwato (of the Bakhurutshe 'allied tribe') in this most Seretse of all places. Hatch told Millard, at least five times, that he wanted to do for Seretse Khama what Professor Keith Hancock, of London University's Institute of Commonwealth Studies, was doing for Kabaka 'Freddie' of Buganda - getting him back home from exile.

The Bangwato response to Hatch in Serowe was somewhat weary. In a memorandum drawn up by K.T. Motsete, they told him that his was the fifth enquiry into the matter. Motsete added, for good measure, a reference to Serowe having become like the 'Deserted Village' of Goldsmith's poem. Other speakers in the Serowe kgotla rehearsed their views in favour of Seretse. Rasebolai, who had been fearing an upset to security, expressed himself happy with the management of Hatch's visit.

It was in Tshekedi's new model village of Pilikwe, south-east of Palapye, that Hatch had his most significant meeting of May 1955. Tshekedi was adamant that Seretse should not return as chief. But he said that neither he nor his followers had ever opposed Seretse's return home as an ordinary citizen. The only problem was Seretse's own obduracy in hanging onto his claim to bogosi. Tshekedi gave Hatch the impression that he would support efforts to get Seretse back home 'as a private individual.' Hatch was amazed to find Tshekedi personally so amenable towards Seretse.

By now Tshekedi was fond of repeating his view that chieftainship was a thing of the past. Millard cynically interpreted this as meaning that Tshekedi wanted constitutional development so that he could dominate the new political system of the whole of Bechuanaland.

Meanwhile and unbeknown to Hatch, John Redfern, a journalist who worked for Beaverbrook's Express newspapers, was writing a book which he was to call Ruth
and Seretse: 'A Disreputable Transaction" The sub-title was a quote from Winston Churchill in the House of Commons in 1950.
Redfern also co-authored a serious play, which was all set to be produced on the London stage by Brian Rix - more famous as a producer of farces. It told of the duplicity of the ministers of Her Majesty's Government. For that reason, the play was totally banned by the Lord Chamberlain, who then acted as Britain's theatrical censor. No script is known to survive, but an idea of its contents may be gathered from the chapter titles of the book, including: 'Cold (Clerical) Feet'; 'What Crime?'; 'Snub for History'; 'The Mean Marquis'; 'Case of Conscience'; and, finally, 'An Appeal'.
Ruth and Seretse was published in July 1955, by the campaigning publisher
Victor Gollancz. Together with Hatch's visit, it helped to bring the case of Seretse Khama back to international public attention. However, British newspapers, like Redfern himself, not unexpectedly focused on the drama of the Briton involved - Ruth Khama - rather than on Seretse. Commonwealth Relations officials considered Redfern's book to be 'unpleasant' but well informed. They faulted Redfern for not subscribing to collective self-delusions, originally invented as rationales but now probably sincerely believed in the C.R.O. One delusion was that British government appeasement of the Union of South Africa was motivated only by humanitarian concern for the welfare of the High Commission Territories - the explanation invented by the C.R.O. and Cabinet to justify the sacrifice of one good man for a million. The other delusion was that the crisis among the Bangwato was motivated solely by age-old dynastic disputes - the explanation originally offered by Tsekhedi and substantiated by Sillery. There was therefore surprise in the C.R.O. at the generally good press that the book received in Britain: 'This is, I am afraid, further evidence that a guilt complex where Seretse is concerned is very widespread.'
South African reviews of Redfern's book reinforced C.R.O. determination not even to consider the return from exile which Ruth and Seretse begged as a happy-ever-after final chapter. Die Transvaler raged on about the irrelevance of the Bangwato, while Die Burger saw the book as part of a 'bitter, prejudiced' conspiracy to set the world against 'South Africa: nameless Afrikaners, Afrikaners in general, Dr Malan, the Dutch Reformed Church.' An editorial in the same newspaper talked of 'a great emotional campaign against South Africa' being blown up in Britain, and 'already a feeling in certain British circles that South Africa should be expelled from the Commonwealth'. 'Nothing. concluded another Die Burger article, 'would give some socialistic longhairs and negrophilist clerics more pleasure than a yearlong crusade for the reinstatement of Seretse.'
The cosy official relationship between Britain and South Africa had, however, been disturbed by the South African general election of April 1953. The landslide white vote for the ruling National Party had almost wiped out the opposition United Party, which stood for improved relations with Britain. Then, in December 1954, the affable Dr Malan had been replaced as Prime Minister by the intransigent J.G. Strijdom (also spelt Strydom). Strijdom had made his name as a
champion of Afrikaner republicanism and as a bitter opponent of the British Commonwealth of Nations. In 1950 he had made a public attack on 'the foolish policy of Britain, France and the United States' against Hitler, which had 'led to the destruction of Germany - the only bulwark against communism.' 44 And it had been the threat of Strijdom taking power that Baring, Smuts, Forsyth, and probably Malan himself, had used as the bogey in the South African cabinet to keep the British government in line over Seretse Khama.

Sour-faced Strijdom came to represent, for the British press, an archetype of evil against which the British public could react, combining old anti-Boer prejudices with newfound revulsion against apartheid. The exact object of this revulsion was yet unclear. 'We find it difficult to convey to you,' said the Women's International Movement for Peace and Freedom in addressing Churchill, 'the extent of our concern at the repressive racial policy of South Africa.' The word 'apartheid' was only just coming into use in informed circles outside South Africa, though it had been in use within the National Party of South Africa since 1938. The grander implications of apartheid ideology had not yet been spelt out in South Africa.45 The C.R.O. was still anxious to harmonize 'native administration' in the High Commission Territories with that of the Union of South Africa. But this was becoming increasingly difficult in practice. Deference to South African interests within the C.R.O. is illustrated by the debate within the C.R.O., in early 1955, over the implications for the High Commission Territories of South Africa becoming a republic.

One of the old school of legal advisers, referring back to the compact of Khama III and others with the British government in 1895, gave his opinion that the Crown could not hand over Bechuanaland to a Republic of South Africa without 'the clearest possible breach of faith with the Bechuana.' However, there were no such constraints to stop Britain handing over Basutoland or Swaziland. C.R.O. officials much preferred the modern (we might now say 'postmodern') view of a 'temporary assistant legal adviser' to the Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Offices. His informed legal opinion was that there was no such thing as a treaty which was 'a binding agreement for all time.'46

On July 17th, 1955, John Hatch's report on his visit to Bechuanaland was considered by the national executive of the Labour Party in London. The executive approved the idea of a round-table conference between Seretse, Tshekedi and other parties among the Bangwato, to thrash out a solution which would allow Seretse back from exile. Seretse had said in private that he was perfectly willing to 'abdicate' and become a private citizen, as long as he could consult his people first.

The Labour Party's colonial spokesman, James Griffiths, began negotiations with the C.R.O. and its current Secretary of State, the Earl of Home (Alec Douglas-Home). The C.R.O. stuck rigidly to the line of not allowing Seretse Khama back home as a private citizen until after Rasebolai was well established as legitimate kgosi rather than mere 'Native Authority.' Home wanted the Labour leader Clement Attlee to use his
influence on Seretse to persuade him to 'abdicate' now without any guaranteed preconditions, in order 'to hasten the day when he can return.'

Seretse and Ruth attended the annual conference of the Labour Party held in the north-western English seaside resort of Blackpool in October 1955. They were loudly cheered by delegates when Dr Edith Summerskill in the chair pointed them out in the public gallery. But she stopped Brockway from speaking about them, on grounds of time.

Seretse and Tshekedi were being drawn close together once more. The Sunday Observer newspaper, owned by Tshekedi's friend and ally David Astor, called for Seretse's return home as a private citizen. Seretse cabled Tshekedi about his attitude to the Labour Party's round-table proposals. This, according to Tshekedi, was Seretse's first direct communication with his uncle in years. Reconciliation between the two men was encouraged by the writer Noni Jabavu, daughter of D.D.T. Jabavu, who together with her English husband visited Seretse and Ruth at Addiscombe with direct news after staying with Tshekedi and Ella at Pilikwe. Tshekedi was growing increasingly keen to get accepted back in the swim of Bangwato kgotla politics, and he knew he needed Seretse's good offices to achieve this. But he was too proud to beg, and instead got word to England that Seretse should tell him 'how he felt we might now co-operate and assist each other.'

The possibility of Seretse's return home was raised in the Commons by Fenner Brockway on October 27th, 1955. Once again Brockway was fobbed off by a stock government reply. Great pains were taken to distinguish the case of Seretse Khama from the case of Kabaka 'Freddie' Mutesa II, who had just been permitted to return home to Uganda from exile in Britain. But by March 1956, Lord Home and officials in the C.R.O. were beginning to waver. They were receiving intelligence that both pro-Seretse and proTshekedi Bangwato were willing to come to London to sit as a united delegation for the round-table conference proposed by the Labour Party.

Percival Liesching, who had now left the C.R.O. to become High Commissioner in Pretoria, was consulted. He strongly advised against anything which would undermine the 'traditional form of government' in the B.P. - referring in particular to the abolition of the chieftainship of the Bangwato which was being proposed by Tshekedi. Home therefore decided to stick to the party line of first getting Rasebolai made chief at any cost. Prime Minister Eden thought the 'Socialist party appears to be behaving very badly' by not agreeing.

When the return home of Kabaka 'Freddie' was announced, an enterprising reporter travelled down to Addiscombe to gauge Seretse's reaction. She found him sitting behind diamond-patterned windows in a living room with dark oak beams in the ceiling and leopard-skin karosses on the floor. There was a television and a 'radiogram', a large cabinet combining radio and gramaphone. The record on the turntable was 'That Old Black Magic'. Seretse had no high hopes of following Freddie. But he remarked, A propos of government ministers, that great men were supposed to be capable of changing
their minds. He was excited by the economic development of his country, with the opening of a new abattoir for meat exports, but wanted to see 'agricultural' as well as 'pastoral' development. Yet ordinary people could not be induced into using new farming methods by government officials. They needed chiefs to persuade them. About himself he added: 'It is very difficult to do nothing at all when there is so much to be done.' Life in exile was obviously getting him down: "One is inclined to get frightfully bored. One would not have time to get bored at home." He seldom uses the first person in speech, it is nearly always "one". His large frame is slowly beginning to silt up with the years of inactivity. He sits with indolent grace in his armchair. His face is often blank, although he is a keen, intelligent man with a wide-smiling charm that makes him many friends. The evenings are spent in entertaining friends and very seldom going out to theatres or dances. Ruth occasionally tries to learn Sechuana, her husband's tongue, which is "terribly difficult" and for which there are no text-books. Cooking, "always chicken curry or steak"; is another pastime. At this point Seretse let off a typically mischievous comment: 'She doesn't cook too badly, he said of his wife, 'considering I taught her.' The reporter was obviously impressed by the relaxed relationship between the couple, remarking: 'One thing is certain. Their marriage will last.', In a subsequent interview, almost four months later in February 1956, Seretse was feeling more optimistic; and was anxious to correct the previous impression he had given of slothfulness. He said he had travelled all over Britain lecturing about Bechuanaland and its people and problems - in Glasgow and Edinburgh, in Leeds and Sheffield, and in Port Talbot and other parts of Wales. (He did not mention appearances in London, such as at a Foyle's literary luncheon, then considered the height of chic society activity.) 'I have no doubt,' added Seretse, 'that if it rested with the ordinary British people, I should be back [home] any time. But it is the British Cabinet that must give the decision.' He was also now getting letters from Bangwato, by nearly every mail delivery, urging him to return home. 'I feel restless; he confessed, - 'an urge to get back to where I rightly belong.' A press clipping of this interview is to be found in the archives of Tshekedi Khama. A bold pencil stroke is marked against one passage. This is where Seretse talks about impending government plans for development in his country. The plans will not work if 'there is no life, no enthusiasm among the people there' and if development is regarded as a purely administrative matter. 'I believe I could help in bringing those plans to a good end, and it would be my aim and joy to do so.

No doubt this is what Tshekedi also thought about himself still being denied the right to participate in local Bangwato politics and administration at Serowe. He was able to engage in territorial or 'national' affairs through his privileged membership of the Joint Advisory Council. But the C.R.O. was resisting his promotion of the idea of the J.A.C. becoming a legislative council - seeing it
merely as a ploy by Tshekedi to become 'the acknowledged leader of all Bechuanaland''

At a government-convened kgotla meeting of October 1955 in Serowe, the Bangwato had been presented with the renewed possibility of mining development in their territory. World mineral prices were high in the post-Korean War economic boom. The Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa was expressing interest in prospecting for copper, coal, diamonds, nickel and asbestos in the Bangwato Reserve. At the same time, the B.P. administration was desperate for revenue to make the whole territory economically self-sufficient, i.e. to cover the costs of colonial administration and development without an annual grant from the British treasury. The potential importance of minerals in the Bangwato Reserve had been recognized in the 'comprehensive review of economic development' prepared for the High Commission Territories by A.C.B. Symon for the Commonwealth Relations Office in December 1954. By October 1955 James Griffith, the Labour Party 'shadow minister' for the colonies, was talking of a potential 'second Copperbelt' in Bechuanaland.

The Bangwato sitting in the Serowe kgotla in October 1955 seized their chance to exert leverage on the B.P. administration, and refused to consider entering into any mining negotiations without the return of Seretse Khama. People also realized that the expertise of Tshekedi would be vital for the Bangwato to obtain any real advantage in negotiations with a wily multinational firm. Tshekedi had, after all, out-maneuvered the same South African corporation in the early 1930s.

At last the Bangwato had a carrot to dangle in front of the British donkey and bring it to its knees. The revenge was sweet because this came at a time when Liesching, as the new High Commissioner, was deliberately snubbing the Bangwato by refusing to visit Serowe on his inaugural tours of the Protectorate. The Symon Report resulted in a British 'White Paper' on the development of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland published in December 1955. A rudimentary development plan for 1956-60 was also drawn up for Bechuanaland.

The main obstacles to change were key colonial administrators - notably Millard as Divisional Commissioner for the northern B.P., and Liesching as High Commissioner in Pretoria. Taking a leaf out of the South African book, where chieftainship was being "re-invented" in the Transkei and elsewhere, Millard and Liesching were die-hard advocates of the necessity for traditional authority over any semblance of democracy in local councils. Tshekedi took issue with his friend Millard over this in December 1955. Tshekedi was by now convinced in private that Seretse's return was essential, in order to achieve the effective abolition of chieftainship. Both Seretse and himself needed to be 'free citizens', to participate in any roundtable conference on the future of the Bangwato. Tshekedi also talked, perhaps idly, of his own followers - the 'so called Rametsana' - 'developing into a Political Party.' But, much to the relief of Liesching and the C.R.O., Tshekedi did not at this stage make public his support for the idea of a roundtable conference.
Rasebolai Kgamaane's rule as Native (Tshekedi preferred 'Tribal') Authority of the Bangwato was becoming increasingly precarious. Since May 30th, 1952, Rasebolai had made an almost clean sweep of the 12 main district governorships (Chiefs Representatives) and village headmanships of the Ngwato state. He had replaced the 'Keaboka crowd' by men sympathetic to Rasebolai. But such men often proved to be extremely unpopular, especially among the 'allied' or subordinate clans. There was a serious outbreak of unrest at Nshakashogwe's village in the Bokalaka (Bokalanga) district during November 1955, when local Bakalanga people began to demonstrate against 'Rametsana' rule in premature expectation of Seretse's return. 60

By February 1956 the Golden City Post, a Johannesburg newspaper aimed at black readers, was saying: 'The chiefless Bamangwato nation is reported to be on the verge of disintegration, and it is believed that only the return of Seretse can return peace, economic stability and security to the protectorate.' 61

Peto Sekgoma, as Seretse's agent, took it upon himself to collect and supply details of judicial and administrative abuse by 'Rametsana' to Fenner Brockway in London. An account of these 'atrocities' was published in three issues of the weekly pacifist newspaper, Peace News, in May-June 1955. It was then prepared as a pamphlet of the Movement for Colonial Freedom, entitled Bechuanaland - What Seretse's Exile Means.62

In fact tension in the Bangwato Reserve appears to have died down by January 1956, when the colonial government's security force was removed from Serowe and Bokalaka and sent back to barracks in Gaborone and Francistown. Bangwato elders were induced back to the Serowe kgotla on March 7th and 26th, 1956, to take up the issue on mineral concessions with the District Commissioner. Most speakers spoke in favour of mining development, but insisted that no collective decision could be made until both Seretse and Tshekedi could participate in negotiations.

Even in Bokalaka, villagers were asking for Tshekedi to explain previous mining concessions to them. Tshekedi was now getting on well with people such as Lenyeletse, perhaps Seretse's closest friend and a former anti-Tshekedi 'Boanerges'. At the end of March, Tshekedi wrote to his legal adviser in London, a Conservative M.P., asking for the question of mining in the Bangwato Reserve to be raised at Westminster. He added that he was coming through London in July-August that year, on his way to settle his two elder sons at boarding school in Ireland.63

Between March and June 1956 there was a barrage of unfavourable publicity for the South African government in the world press, which helped to bring public attention in Britain back to the questions of Bechuanaland and Seretse Khama. Naught for your Comfort by Father Trevor Huddleston, a devastating critique of South African race policies, was published over Easter 1956. Also published, almost at the same time, was the Tomlinson Report, which advised the South African government (albeit impractically) on how to implement the 'grand apartheid' of territorial segregation, dividing South Africa into white and black territories.
The Tomlinson Report treated the High Commission Territories as an integral and indispensable part of 'grand apartheid' - as 'heartlands' for the 'Bantu homelands'. Incorporation of Bechuanaland, in particular, would convert the miserable 13 percent of the land reserved for black 'tribal' ownership to a much more healthy looking 45 percent of the total.

The publication of the Tomlinson Report marked an insuperable parting of the ways between Britain and South Africa over 'native policy'. South Africa was aiming at total racial separation; Britain was moving in the direction of 'multiracialism' in the High Commission Territories. British policy in Swaziland and Bechuanaland was to encourage rather than discourage 'white capital' and white settlement."

The C.R.O. response to the Tomlinson Report was immediate. On April 17th, 1956, the British government repeated to the South African government its warnings of 1949 and 1954 that the transfer of the High Commission Territories to South Africa was not practical politics in Westminster. Informed opinion reckoned that the transfer issue was just about the only colonial question that could bring down a British government, Conservative or Labour, because a considerable number of its own backbenchers would vote against the governing party.65

Publicity given to Father Huddleston, a tall eloquent man always dressed in a flowing cassock, made the sheer immortality of apartheid into a big issue in Britain for the first time. There were the beginnings of regular antiapartheid demonstrations outside South Africa House in London's Trafalgar Square. Huddleston toured the country. Speaking in Bristol in June, he argued that Britain had the chance to turn the High Commission Territories into shop windows of 'multiracialism' for South Africa.

Then, to cap it all, came condemnation out of apartheid's own mouth when Prime Minister Strijdom of South Africa arrived in Britain in late June, to attend a Commonwealth prime ministers' conference. Strijdom adopted the disastrous tactic of appealing to the racism which British people liked to think they lacked, thereby sounding like a Nazi:

Britons, [be] proud of your British race and heritage ... which like ours is white and European.

Strijdom claimed that his people were headed for 'race suicide' without apartheid. The C.R.O. retorted privately that it was apartheid repression that was hastening the 'end of the whites.' There appears to have been little love lost between Prime Minister Eden of Great Britain and Prime Minister Strijdom of South Africa, or between the Earl of Home and his opposite number, the choleric South African foreign minister Eric Louw. Home in particular was rapidly losing patience.66

Tshekedi arrived in London by sea in July 1956, with his wife and two elder sons, ostensibly on a private visit without political overtones. Public attention by now was taken up with the Suez Crisis. Nasser announced Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal on July 26th.

The issue of Seretse's return home, raised officially by the Labour Party, was debated once again in the House of Commons on August 1st. Once again it met
with a predictable government rebuff. Speakers and speeches were also mostly predictable. Tony Benn added a new flourish by comparing the issue of Seretse Khama - 'debated and discussed wherever intelligent thinking people meet in any part of the world' - with Miss Lucy, whose struggle to become the first black student to enter the University of Alabama had also been making news.

One significant new note in the debate was the call of Conservatives as well as Labourites for the development of democratic institutions in Bechuanaland. The House of Commons had, after all, been discussing the merits of self-government for colonies in West Africa and could see no reason why similar principles should not apply elsewhere.

Tshekedi contacted Seretse at Addiscombe on August 5th, from his hotel in Bayswater. There is no record of their discussion, but it appears that it was Tshekedi who persuaded Seretse that now was the time to act. They should take advantage of the breach which had opened up, but which might again close, between the British establishment and White South Africa.

Seretse and Tshekedi were intensely wary of premature publicity, which had destroyed their previous compact of August 1950. They agreed to keep their negotiations secret from both Seretse's largely Labour supporters and from Tshekedi's largely Conservative supporters, until their joint case was unstoppable. But they strategically took into their confidence Clement Davies, the leader of the Liberals at Westminster. The small but principled Liberal Party was the party that had most consistently supported both of them.

On August 15th, 1956, Seretse and Tshekedi appeared before the Earl of Home with a signed joint statement. In it, Seretse joined Tshekedi in renouncing the chieftainship for himself and his children. They said there was no longer any dispute between them, and both wished to live freely in the Bangwato Reserve with their families. They would then do everything in their power to help develop representative institutions, notably a tribal council, without disputing the right of Rasebolai to be what was by now called 'African Authority'. They both wanted to return home 'as free citizens with as full political rights as anyone else, and to be allowed to serve our people in any capacity to which they may wish to elect us.'

To symbolize their reconciliation, Tshekedi and his wife Ella, and their sons Leapeetswe and Sekgoma moved in to stay with Seretse and his family in Addiscombe for their last two weeks, before returning home to prepare the way for Seretse's return. The Tshekedi children were keen horse-riders who happily accompanied Ruth on her early morning canters.

Home was enthusiastic at Seretse's 'abdication', but let out no hope of Seretse's imminent return. Behind the scenes he leapt at the opportunity to solve once and for all the intractable case of Seretse Khama, which had dogged British governments for seven years. Going against the received wisdom of his officials, he ordered an urgent review of the case within the C.R.O. A case history was drawn up for their superiors by C.R.O. officials Eleanor Emery and Michael Fairlie. (Twenty years later, Eleanor Emery was to be Britain's High Commissioner in Botswana.)
Home concluded, in a memorandum to Cabinet dated November 7th, that the establishment of Rasebolai as full chief - the sticking point of all Conservative policy - was impracticable for the foreseeable future. But he had to sound out Rasebolai's agreement to Seretse's return, and to make sure that Seretse's return as an ordinary person could be stage-managed without problems.69

The most vital question, surprisingly not considered in the Cabinet memorandum, was political assessment of the likely impact on South Africa's claims to the High Commission Territories.0 As it happened, both London

and Liesching had received soothing intelligence on this from an American source.

The American historian John S. Galbraith, director of British Empire studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, was doing the rounds of southern Africa on a Ford Foundation grant. He was finding South African parliamentarians remarkably conciliatory over the issue of the High Commission Territories. They did not want to attract any more opprobrium for White South Africa than it was currently enduring in the world's press.

Galbraith had been disconcerted to find that senior colonial officials in Bechuanaland were holding back on the development of more democratic tribal councils, now an advertised aspect of Conservative as well as Labour policy.71 After presenting his Cabinet Memorandum on September 1th, sandwiched between consideration of Ghana's independence and the Suez Crisis, Home returned to Cabinet on September 26th and came away with a simple announcement of success.72

The announcement of Seretse's renunciation of chieftainship, and of his impending return from exile, was made on September 26th in Serowe, and to the press in London. People in Serowe and the press had actually already heard the news on the radio the night before. According to Tshekedi's friends, John Hatch had 'leaked' the news to two newspapers on the 24th. The press had then staked out the Khama household in Addiscombe on the 25th. Ruth Khama had taken Jacqueline to her primary school (Addiscombe College) and Ian to his Croydon nursery school in the morning, while Seretse stayed behind to man the telephone.73 Questioned after the announcement on the morning of the 26th, Seretse replied:

This is a great day for me. I shall miss my friends, but I have been dying to get home. I expect to go within a month. I expect my wife and children will fly out later.74

Seretse and Ruth also reportedly sent their thanks to Clement Davies for his help in recent weeks - and not to the Labour Party, whose John Hatch was attempting to take the credit. The Observer four days later remarked that the enthusiasm of the Khamas was 'quite infectious: you would think there was no place in the world so wonderful to live in as Serowe.' 75

Seretse flew out from London's Heathrow airport on Tuesday, October 9th, 1956. He told reporters that he wanted to help his people 'to develop a democratic system, raise the standard of living and establish a happy healthy nationhood.' He
added: 'I have renounced the chieftainship as I have always been prepared to do. I will be taking part in local politics if I so wish.' 76

South African newspapers were taken aback at the news of Seretse's impending return, but were surprisingly muted. Die Transvaler saw it as an offensive condonation of mixed marriages. The Rand Daily Mail deplored the British tendency to see Seretse 'as a sort of African Duke of Windsor,' while the Johannesburg Star thought the decision 'explosive.'

The enthusiasm of the British press and establishment was summed up by The Times. After praising the integrity and dignity of Seretse, Tshekedi and Ruth Khama, the newspaper commented on the ineptness of British administration:

The fundamental mistake was committed when, this decision having been taken for deeply based imperial reasons, the attempt was made to disguise it as a concession to the wishes of the tribe ... All the subsequent embarrassments have flowed from the intellectual dishonesty of this unhappy procedure.78

The return home of Seretse and Ruth was almost lost in the media in the much more dramatic news of the Suez Crisis. Britain and France declared war on Egypt at the end of October, and were reduced to a humiliating cease-fire a week later. People began to realize that the imperial era was over.

Chapter 7
COUNCILLOR
1956-60

Seretse Khama arrived back in Bechuanaland from exile at 5 pm on Wednesday, October 10th, 1956. At Francistown airport Seretse was welcomed on the tarmac by his sister Oratile and by his uncles Tshekedi and Rasebolai. 'Tshekedi’s hat was whipped off by the wind, but he hardly noticed it in the grip of the moment of friendship after years of dispute.' Through the roar of the wind they could hear the roar of the crowd come to greet Seretse at the airport gate.

Seretse tried to address the crowd at the gate, holding out his arms 'like Billy Graham,' but people refused to stop loudly jubilating. His car was mobbed by 'thousands of men, women and children, tightly packed,' jamming the progress of the car for maybe ten minutes. 'Men threw their hats into the air, and while some women flung themselves to the ground, others kissed the car's bonnet.'

After a short conference at the offices of the Divisional Commissioner, Seretse once again attempted to address people but could not be heard above the din. He was taken by car to stay overnight with his sister Oratile Ratshosa in the township reserved for Africans at the south end of the 'European' quarter of Francistown.

Late on Thursday afternoon Seretse drove into Palapye and received 'a noisy and enthusiastic welcome. before branching off on the dirt road to Serowe. The last few kilometres into the capital were lined by a cheering mass of people. After reporting to the District Commissioner, Seretse was taken through the crowds to the chiefs residence and the Tribal Office behind the kgotla. The journalist Stanley Uys reported:
The welcome in front of Rasebolai's house was fantastic. The crowd surged and swayed around Seretse, stretching out their hands to touch him, pat him, caress him. It was sheer joy. The Bulawayo Chronicle added:
as Seretse emerged from the office, the first crash of thunder split the air. Flashes of lightning followed each other and clouds erupted ... "Seretse's home and it's raining," screamed the mob. "Seretse has brought the pula [rain]." 4
Over the next few days the colonial authorities were gratified to see that Seretse, 'moving freely about the town, had a most calming effect.' He 'virtually leaned over backwards.' according to the Johannesburg Star, 'to discourage demonstrations.' He also agreed that the kgotla assembly to receive him back should be delayed from Saturday to Wednesday. And he tried to persuade women not to come to the meeting - a characteristic, if awkwardly expressed, attempt by Seretse to contain emotionalism in politics.5
The welcoming assembly in the Serowe kgotla began at 9 am on the Wednesday.
A delegation of four men and one woman came forward, from the crowd of between five to seven thousand, to greet Seretse. The men squatted respectfully, holding their hats, while the shawled woman knelt behind them. A photograph shows Rasebolai and Chief Bathoen II of the Bangwaketse leaning forward from their seats to hear the deputation, while Seretse and Tshekedi lean back against the kgotla poles, listening with heads on one side.6 Rasebolai then introduced Seretse, who 'spoke at length and with great sincerity.' Other speakers followed, notably Keaboka, whose speech, like Seretse's, 'completely took the wind out of the sails' of young men in the crowd. Young men who might otherwise have tried to re-install Seretse as kgosi by noisy acclamation in kgotla.
There was a moment of misunderstanding at the end of the meeting. Chief Mokgosi III of the Balete called on Seretse and Tshekedi to make up and shake hands in public. But elders at the front hissed against this alien custom, and the two men desisted. People at the back of the crowd could not hear the elders at the front and - until they were suitably enlightened - vocally expressed their disappointment at the two men not shaking hands.7
International press coverage was eclipsed by the aftermath of the failed Hungarian revolution of November 5th, and of the Suez Canal ceasefire on November 8th. But there was a marked contrast between the reactions of British newspapers and South African newspapers to the story of Seretse Khama's return home to Bechuanaland.
The Scotsman newspaper struck an optimistic note by publishing a long article titled 'Apartheid as a boomerang.' The *real story* behind Seretse's return home, according to the newspaper, was that Bechuanaland could now develop rich deposits of 'copper, chrome and zinc' - which 'opens up the unwelcome prospect of an independent Black State on the borders of the Union.' The Scotsman spelt out the implications. Bechuanaland would need white people, and thus 'multi-racialism, to develop its resources; though the people of
Bechuanaland would be averse to bringing in South African whites with apartheid ideas. Bechuanaland could thereby 'give a strong lead' to 'the Liberal wing of African opinion in the Union who favour co-operation with the whites,' as exemplified by Dr. Xuma of the A.N.C. Liberal democracy in Bechuanaland would be a slap in the face not only for apartheid but also for anti-white black nationalists and the *not yet significant* number of communists in South Africa.8

The English-language press in South Africa had little to say. A typically haughty editorial in the Rand Dail Mail wondered what all the fuss was about. A correspondent in The Star thought 'that the troubles of the Bamangwato are not over:

The response of the Afrikaans press was much more vigorous. Die Transvaler, voice of the ruling faction in the National Party, pursued The Scotsman's line of argument to opposite effect. It argued that, through the return of Seretse, Britain was promoting in Bechuanaland 'a form of Western democratic control which completely departs from tribal tradition ... which the Union Government applies in South African Native Areas.' The newspaper expressed its fears that development of mineral concessions in Bangwato territory would give its people the clout to resist South African incorporation of their land.9

South African government response to the British government's release of Seretse from exile was, as anticipated, muted. Their High Commissioner in London petitioned the Commonwealth Relations Office for clarification of Britain's intentions for the political development of Bechuanaland. The High Commissioner was anxious not to give the impression of interfering in Britain's patch, but the South African government could not hide its concern about the potential development of 'multi-racialism' and liberal democratic institutions in Bechuanaland.

The development of white settlement in Bechuanaland was now in stark contradiction to South Africa's 'grand apartheid' plan which envisaged Bechuanaland as a purely black territory. The further threat to White South Africa, highlighted by the return home of Seretse and its boost to the political ambitions of Tshekedi, was the political development of Bechuanaland through local 'tribal' councils, leading to a multi-racial Legislative Council for the whole territory. Tshekedi had been calling for such a 'Legco' since 1954.10

Seretse toured the Bangwato Reserve during the rest of October 1956, being welcomed by his people and renouncing his chieftainship. But he was dog-tired after days of kgotla meetings in the extreme dry heat at Mahalapye, Shoshong, Sefhare and Palapye.

It was agreed to have one just more meeting, in Sebina village in the troubled north, before resuming in November. He addressed all Kalanga headmen in Sebina on October 28th. Even the aged John Nswazwi II, Tshekedi's old enemy, returned temporarily from exile to witness Seretse's new coming. Seretse appealed for all differences to be buried. But the
assembly muttered against Tshekedi when he spoke in public. One young man, probably from Nkange or Thtume, compounded his hostility by refusing to speak in Setswana, insisting on addressing the assembly in the Ikalanga language.

The British authorities were pleased: 'Seretse's handling of the very difficult situation in which he found himself has been superb.' An intelligence report noted with satisfaction that school attendances were up, taxes were coming in, and the prospect of councils was filling the political vacuum of the future in the minds of the Bangwato. The omens seemed good for a new council system under the joint leadership of Rasebolai, Tshekedi and Seretse though 'the young radicals, the intelligentsia' might take advantage of 'democracy' now that it was conclusively 'unhampered by a chieftainship.'

Ruth and the two children quietly joined Seretse in Serowe in early November. The family moved into a former white trader's house, given to Seretse by Tshekedi, in the central trading area of Serowe which is today known as the Serowe Mall. Relations between Ruth and local colonial officials resumed their accustomed coolness. But Divisional Commissioner Millard saw Seretse's convivial cousin Lenyeletse Seretse as a much greater threat: A regular visitor to the house in Serowe is Lenyeletse, smart, well educated, and intelligent, at the same time violently anti-European and bitter, also a booser [sic]. One can only hope that this man and his friends do not have a bad influence on Seretse who has started off so well. Fortunately Seretse and Rasebolai are already bosom companions, and the latter is bound to have a good effect on Seretse and his outlook.

Seretse began to steer back into controversy in November, after he appeared before the kgotla of the contentious Bakhurutshe people at Tonota in the north. Though at the actual meeting 'people ... were held in check by fear of Govt. sending S.K. back to the U.K.' they came to Seretse and to Lenyeletse later to air their grievances. Tonota people bitterly resented the rule of Okame, Tshekedi's place-man as sub-chief there. Seretse gave close ear to those who complained of the unfair trading and transport monopolies wielded by Okame. He is reported to have said: All these licences should be shared out, so that most people can have a chance to open a business no matter how small.”

Seretse and Rasebolai reportedly became 'bosom companions' during the two week period in November 1956 when Tshekedi flew to France, in his role as a development consultant to the Council of Europe at Strasbourg.

Seretse became involved in development discussions with Jimmy Allison, who was acting as Serowe District Commissioner for the first month after Seretse arrived. Allison had gathered opinions from the sub-districts, and drew up a list of 12 issues which he thought should be considered by a 'reformed tribal council'. But the momentum was to be lost after the return to Serowe, in mid-November 1956, of Bruce Rutherford as District Commissioner. Rutherford was one of the old school of administrators, originally recruited as a junior clerk from a South African bank in 1932. Allison by contrast was younger, university-educated, and sympathetic towards Seretse: he had been one of the junior district officers at Serowe who had revolted against British policy in 1952.
Allison was posted to another district and Seretse was left to face Bruce Rutherford, who placed him under strict surveillance. As for Jessie Rutherford, she took a long time to warm to Ruth Khama. The Rutherfords set the pace for the rest of the white community in the district to follow, though there were exceptions who were friendly to Seretse and Ruth notably Thomas and Minnie Shaw at Palapye.

Official coldness towards Seretse and Ruth was no doubt the result of deliberate policy set from the top by Sir Percival Liesching, Britain's current High Commissioner in Pretoria. An old enemy of Tshekedi's since 1933, and of Seretse's since 1949, he had made it plain that he was anxious to take the bumptious Bangwato down a peg or two.

Seretse for his part began to exhibit a defiant streak towards the district administration in early 1957 - notably in revealing and challenging police "spies' sitting in kgotla. In this he was echoing the views of Lenyeletse. But he was careful not to go so far as to alienate the British authorities in London, to whom he was behoven for his regular monthly allowance.

The greatest problem facing the family in re-settling in a racially segregated society, was the education of the children. Ruth had talked about seven-year-old Jacqueline having a private tutor at Serowe, before going on to Moeng College, the secondary school of the Bangwato in the hills east of Palapye. No such tutor was available. So, after some wrangling, Jacqueline was admitted to Gwen Blackbeard's primary school in Serowe in January 1957, as an exception to its whites-only rule. The school continued to refuse to admit other 'coloured' Eurafican children. Little Jackie herself seems to have adapted well enough. 'I like London better, and I do miss the telly. But, well, it is fun here; she was quoted as saying in May 1957.

Plans to send Jacqueline to Moeng were shelved, because of student troubles and administrative problems there. By June 1957 Seretse and Ruth had decided to send their daughter on to Southern Rhodesia for secondary education, trusting that the much vaunted 'multi-racialism' of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland would be a reality, at least in a private school.

Meanwhile four-year-old Ian, who had been to nursery school in Addiscombe, stayed at home in Serowe, being readied for Setswana-medium school by the care of household servants and retainers.

Millard secretly reported, with a somewhat jaundiced eye, on the progress of Seretse and Ruth in settling down in Serowe in January 1957:

'It is clear that Seretse is something of a disappointment to the tribe; people still go to him hopefully with their troubles, but he, true to his word, will have nothing to do with them ... Ruth, on the other hand, is the subject of much chatter among the African women-folk.

They resent the fact that she cannot speak Setswana, and they are shocked when she wears slacks (as she often does).

Millard offered a rather more revealing explanation in another report: 'The women clearly expect Ruth to behave like one of them, and the independent line being
taken by her could perhaps result in a reflection on Seretse for not keeping her in her place.'22

Social life in Serowe, still bearing the traces of having been the capital of Khama the Great's temperance kingdom, proved to be a trifle dull. There was convivial company among Seretse's relatives and friends, with much opportunity for informed and intelligent conversation. But there was a distinct lack of social venues and public events. The social boycott of Ruth and Seretse by Serowe whites was also beginning to take effect. When they tried to go to a fund-raising dance, organized by local traders, in mid-February 1957, the dance was abruptly and indefinitely postponed on account of 'hot weather'. 23

At the end of the month Seretse and Ruth sought escape from Serowe by staying with his sister Oratile at Francistown. The black township in which they stayed was on the southern edge of town and was known by its inhabitants as 'Sodom and Gomorrah'. (The site is today occupied by a modern hotel called Thapama Lodge.) Francistown itself was a whitesonly grid of streets on the eastern side of the railway town, with a rough hard-drinking reputation. In appearance it was not unlike a frontier town in a cowboy movie: the dusty main street had places to tie horses and two hotels with latticed swing-doors.

Seretse and Ruth set out to sample the night-life of the Francistown hotels. Entering through the swing doors, they caused a sensation in the saloon bar of the grandiloquently named but rather modest Grand Hotel. (The other hotel was the Tati: local lore had it that while the Grand was not grand, the Tati certainly was tatty.)24 No doubt their entrance caused a hush in the hubbub of the saloon bar. The bar was by convention reserved for whites, and white males at that; while 'coloured' men took the public bar, and Africans were forbidden by law to be customers at all for 'European' liquor. But the moment of tension was broken by a couple of 'reasonable Europeans' who spirited the couple off to a table in the comer, out of reach of the 'tough boys' ogling from the bar.

Resentment was more obviously directed at Ruth than at Seretse, but the drinkers turned back to their drinks. Seretse and Ruth stayed for 90 minutes, and then left peacefully. Seretse obeyed the law and did not order any alcoholic drink for himself. He allegedly swapped Ruth's gins for his soft drinks, but was sober when he left.25

Millard personally took Seretse aside the next morning and 'was able to hint that it was 'not done' to take a decent girl into a public bar in this country' - except on a 'gala night.' Millard suspected that Seretse had been put up to the Grand Hotel adventure by his cousin Lenyeletse, 'who was hovering in the background.26 The incident further convinced him that Ruth and the children should go 'home' to England - to maintain Seretse's prestige among the Bangwato and thus political stability for the colonial regime.

As for Francistown, Millard was increasingly exercised by the growth of a vociferous white settler community, after the Tati Company which owned the town and the land rights around it had come under new, Johannesburgbased ownership in 1955. The new owners were determined to maximize profits by
sales of farm land to new white settlers from South Africa and by rents from the Francistown locations to which African 'squatters' were being expelled from the new white farms.27

The very existence of Ruth and Seretse, as a prominent 'mixed' couple in an otherwise segregated society, was seen as the thin end of a dangerous wedge prising apart the basic racial assumptions of colonial rule. A ludicrous note was introduced into police surveillance by fears of a wave of black men marrying white women. Spies relayed in all seriousness the no doubt joking remark of a white woman in Francistown, the wife of a professional cricketer in England, who leaned across the tea table at the Tati Hotel to ask Ruth if she 'could find a decent African as a husband for her.' Rumours were also treated seriously of English wives being taken by Bangwato educated overseas - one of them being Kenneth Koma, Seretse's erstwhile supporter and future opponent, then a postgraduate student at Sheffield University.28

Seretse found it galling to have his every move watched by Special Branch agents, who sat around openly eavesdropping on meetings. He was not free from surveillance even at the dead of night. Here one may quote the Northern Division Intelligence Committee's monthly report for February 1957: 'The Committee is satisfied that up to the present anyway, Seretse has been faithful to Ruth.'

It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that Seretse publicly identified and rounded on 'S.B. operatives' sitting in the Serowe kgotla in February and March 1957. The Special Branch was obliged to resort to more inventive and covert methods of gathering intelligence.29

The position of Seretse and Ruth Khama's household in the centre of Serowe meant a constant stream of people expecting the courtesy and attention customarily given to visitors. Ruth battled against the dry climate and red sandy soils to keep the house clean and the floors polished, with the assistance of servants and retainers often chosen for reasons other than domestic efficiency. Ruth's insistence on hygiene and healthy diet sometimes led to misunderstandings, as when she objected to cracked enamel cups or to strange food offered to her children by kindly Bangwato - which the children should, in traditional courtesy, have accepted, if only to taste it. Her insistence on her children speaking English, and not Setswana, in her presence also inhibited ordinary Bangwato from entering the house. But, as the lawful wife of the rightful kgosi, she undoubtedly received widespread respect as a mohumagadi from ordinary Bangwato.30

Ruth Khama interpreted her responsibilities of community leadership in modern ways that she knew and understood. She was elected, with Millard's covert assistance, as secretary of the Serowe branch of the Girl Guides. She took a leading role in adult education in Serowe, starting with a scheme to teach women cooking and sewing and progressing to a plan for a community centre. Nurses from the Sekgoma Memorial Hospital in Serowe came in to teach hygiene and child-care. Ruth raised money by organizing ballroom dancing and concerts 'among the African community,' and by contacts with the wives of European traders. She was also running a productive vegetable garden.3"
Both Seretse and Ruth showed great enthusiasm for sports in Serowe, organizing soccer and athletics, boxing and tennis. They welcomed visiting 'coloured' and African soccer teams, and set up a sports tournament for Easter Monday in 1957 - to raise funds for a community building in central Serowe. Rasebolai opened the event; Jessie Rutherford presented the prizes. Millard's monthly newsletter reported: 'Seretse was a sight, dressed in a soft cloth hat, brash shirt, and dark glasses. Mrs K wore slacks.' 32

Seretse and Ruth began to hold regular sports Saturdays on the dusty black cotton-soil fields east of Serowe Hill. In June 1957 the football field was surrounded by a bright green rubber-plant hedge, and people were charged entry to football matches. Ruth Khama raised money selling refreshments. The Special Branch claimed that 'certain people ... said they felt ashamed seeing the madam making a spectacle of herself running a stall in the village.' By September this complaint had become: 'She is selling cool drinks and cakes at the football ground, thus taking the African traders' trade away everyday there is a football match. People are also complaining about having to pay to watch football.'33

Old friends from the British press periodically reported on the welfare of the Khamas. Margaret Lessing of the Daily Herald visited in June 1957, remarking that Seretse was 20 pounds lighter than last year. 'The current hit tune of the local dancers' reported Lessing, 'begins "Seretse and Ruth have come back to us",' Ernest Shirley of the London Daily Mail voiced Ruth's concern over Seretse's health in July 1957. He was ignoring a kidney complaint to go on rigorous 14-day trips with his uncle Tshekedi to far flung cattle-posts. Seretse owned, according to Shirley, up to 30 000 cattle - probably a wild overestimate. He was also building a new house on Serowe's 'Nob Hill'. Seretse told Shirley: 'It has always been my dream to give Ruth an attractive and comfortable home in Serowe.' 34

Seretse and Ruth had decided in March 1957 to build a new house on the outskirts of Serowe, on the top of a small hill called Palama-o-ku'e ('climb and shout', referring to the baboons which had once lived on the hill). The hill overlooked the homes of the District Commissioner and other colonial officers - which had themselves been placed on a ridge to overlook the town as a whole. Seretse and Ruth would be overlooking the overseers. The new house was also a long walk from town. Members of Seretse's ageregiment, the Malekantwa, proposed to build their own houses around Seretse's. But Seretse overruled this, as the new house would become the centre of a new 'ward' of town. Only his personal retainers would be allowed to build, unobtrusively, nearby.

Jessie Rutherford said acidly that Ruth Khama wanted a remote house 'as she was tired of having Africans squatting all day long in her back yard.' (In fact, Seretse had told the Earl of Home in September 1956 that 'it would be better if he lived away from Serowe so that he should not embarrass Rasebolai') Mrs Rutherford was voicing the resentment of colonial administrators over the fact that water carts and construction vehicles would make a thoroughfare of the quiet road that ran between their offices and their residences."
Malekantwa members built roads, prepared the site, and began to lay the foundations. The house was planned to have four bedrooms, two bathrooms, a modern kitchen, piped water and sewerage. But Seretse soon learned the frustrations of relying on unpaid tributary labour. The voluntarism of such workers quickly waned and turned to resentment over their exploitation, and the Khamas had to turn to paid building contractors instead.

There was nevertheless sufficient structure by mid-November 1957 to hold a house-warming party. It was attended by senior colonial officials, of whom all but two were Europeans, plus Rasebolai and a number of local white traders. The officials turned a blind eye to the liquor laws being flouted.

Even a European like Ruth could only drink liquor legally in Khama's country by buying an import permit. In July 1957 she had been given a permit to import two bottles of whisky, two bottles of brandy, and two bottles of gin. As an African, Seretse technically broke the law by drinking any of it. Seretse's political status was assured as one of the 'Big Three' or 'powerful trio at the head of the tribe', together with Rasebolai and Tshekedi. But he stood aloof from active involvement in politics. Predictions that he would soon challenge or at least openly debate political options with Tshekedi proved groundless. Milward could report in January 1957:

In the Bamangwato Reserve political agitation and intrigue, which in recent years has become part of the way of life, has disappeared almost entirely ... the hard-bitten agitators appear to have come over on the side of law and order ... the tribe as a whole, however, appear to be adopting an attitude of wait-and-see. Seretse confounded all expectations by quarrelling neither with Tshekedi nor Rasebolai. Tshekedi's absence in France and Ireland in late 1957, advising the Council of Europe and seeing his sons in school, had given Seretse the chance to get to know and trust Rasebolai. On Tshekedi's return, Seretse characteristically laughed off stories that his uncle, who always had an underground reputation as a sorcerer (moloi), was trying to bewitch him with crocodile medicines or by planting rhino horns in his fields. Such rumours seem to have abated by Easter of 1957, but were given a temporary fillip when someone brought a small Limpopo crocodile into the government veterinary office at Serowe. Ruth Khama, on the other hand, could never feel wholly at ease with Tshekedi, because of the past between them.

Tshekedi was the ideas man and effective leader of the Big Three, while Rasebolai was the stolid administrator. Seretse's role was less active or well defined. Seretse seemed content with fence-sitting rather than risking the unpopularity that Tshekedi and Rasebolai undoubtedly attracted by expressing themselves forthrightly. When there was some mild disagreement between the Big Three, it was nearly always Tshekedi who was first and Rasebolai who was last in the pecking order.

A year after Seretse's return, a correspondent of The Observer remarked that Seretse, Tshekedi and Rasebolai, 'who might now be intriguing madly against one another for personal power seem in fact to be working cordially together.'
The first task of the Big Three had been to get the Bangwato to accept the principle of mineral development in the Reserve, and the opening of negotiations with mining companies. This was achieved by a series of kgotla meetings in October-November 1956, after which Tshekedi made mining negotiations his special responsibility - recruiting firms of London and Bulawayo attorneys as Bangwato agents, and trying to interest mining companies in France and Rhodesia.

The second task for the Big Three was one for which Seretse was much more enthusiastic than Tshekedi or Rasebolai, who had a heavy interest in maintaining the status quo - the institution of local democracy through Area and Tribal Councils, and the consequent reform of local area administration. Seretse saw this as opening up political opportunities for the intelligentsia, with African nationalist ideas of which the authorities were so suspicious, to become part of the political process of selfgovernment. Commoners in Bokhurutshe and Bokalanga let it be known that they would only nominate candidates for election if they were 'supported by Seretse in person.'

Constitutional negotiations proceeded, between December 1956 and February 1957, through a large committee elected in the Serowe kgotla, and a small sub-committee consisting of Tshekedi, Monametse Chiepe and two colonial officials. The proposals for election and nomination procedures from Area Councils to the Tribal Council were forwarded to the High Commissioner, and were made public when Rasebolai addressed Bangwato headmen, in the red-brick Arthington Hall in Serowe, in April 1957.

Seretse attempted to restrain political speculation about the future, until the High Commissioner's response was known. But a definite rise in expectancy of political change was noticeable even in kgotla debates.

By June 1957 the colonial authorities were reporting that it was evident that the Big Three were doing more than 'striving hard to re-establish tribal unity' among the Bangwato. They were also trying to establish 'a greater degree of independence from [colonial] Government and the fostering of a national movement' for the whole of Bechuanaland. But the evidence for this was in the actions of Tshekedi rather than those of Seretse.

Tshekedi's vision of a 'national movement' was essentially limited to federalism between the tribal states of Bechuanaland. He did not look forward to a single unitary state. He had been pressing such federal ideas at least since 1950, basing them on the historic alliance of the Bangwato, Bakwena and Bangwaketse states. Tshekedi had also, along with white members of the Joint Advisory Council, been toying with the prospect of Bechuanaland joining the Central African Federation as a self-governing territory - to escape the fate of incorporation into the Union of South Africa usually held out as Bechuanaland's ultimate destiny.

Seretse, on the other hand, had been infused with more conventional ideas...
of African nationalism while in exile in London. He was cautious, however, in applying them to Bechuanaland. He could see no clear horizon for a wider territorial nationalism, before the constitutional future of local government was settled.

Tshekedi’s close associate Molwa Sekgoma may have been enthusiastically endorsing ‘either T.K. or S.K” as future ‘leader and possibly Prime Minister of the whole B.P.’ in January. But as late as March 1957, Seretse’s friend Goareng Mosinyi was heard saying that while slow development of local councils ‘would ultimately result in the African being allowed to govern and administer his own affairs ... it would certainly not be in our lifetime’ 46

What came to the notice of the colonial authorities in May 1957 was that Seretse and Lenyeletse were in active contact with African nationalists in Southern Rhodesia. Intelligence reports saw Seretse as having got together with the ‘young radical group’ or educated ‘young bloods’ of the Bangwato, who had formed the Bamangwato National Congress in 1952. L.D. Raditladi, the founder of that party, had returned home from Francistown at Seretse’s request, to play his part in the new dispensation in Serowe. Another former Bamangwato National Congress member, Monametse Chiepe, was seen as a more effective potential leader of the new nationalist movement.

Meanwhile, Raditladi kept in touch with the politics of Francistown, where his B.P. Workers Union and his ‘middle class’ Francistown African Cultural Organisation included leaders such as Phillip G. Matante. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that by May 1957 intelligence reports were referring to the existence of a ‘B.P. African Congress’, led by Raditladi and more or less synonymous with an expanded version of the old Bamangwato National Congress membership.47

Seretse and Lenyeletse were seen to be in the thick of it. 4

Seretse and Lenyeletse, who acted as his secretary and did all his typing - since Ruth could not type - initiated contacts with the trade union movement and African National Congress of Southern Rhodesia in May 1957. Joshua Nkomo and Knight Maripe, organizers of a recent strike by the Rhodesia Railways African Workers Union at Bulawayo, crossed the border in their Buick and drove to Francistown and Serowe. Both men were Kalanga with cultural roots on either side of the border. Bechuanaland-born Maripe was already liaising with L.D. Raditladi’s union at Francistown. Nkomo had known Seretse when they were both students in Johannesburg in 1945. Seretse rose from his sick bed in the Serowe hospital to meet his guests. Nkomo and Maripe stayed at Dikgakgamatso’s house and talked with the ‘young bloods'
for three days. Intelligence sources were mystified as to the exact purpose of the visit. This being at a time when Seretse and Lenyeletse were deliberately misleading and making fun of Special Branch operators. The mystery deepened when Tshekedi joined Seretse on a return visit to Nkomo in Bulawayo at the end of June. The connection that police sources failed to make was that Monametse Chiepe lay dying of liver cancer in a Bulawayo hospital. They also failed to see a motive for Nkomo and Maripe, who were busy preparing the revival of the Southern Rhodesia A.N.C., which was constituted on September 12th, 1957. Chiepe died on July 30th, but contacts between Lenyeletse and Maripe continued until December. Seretse failed to persuade Maripe to stand for the Bangwato area council elections in September 1957, to fill Chiepe's shoes as the leading Kalanga intellectual on the Tribal Council. The alternative was the cantankerous K.T. Motsele, a crony of the discredited Keaboka, who had alienated himself from Seretse by September. The Northern Division Intelligence Committee, on the other hand, was sure that Maripe was setting up 'an A.N.C. cell in the B.P.,' with 'Lenyeletse, Seretse and no doubt others of the intelligentsia.'50

Seretse learnt to exploit the essential ambiguity of his position in politics and society - as a mediator not only between modernity and traditionalism and (through his marriage) between black and white, but also between aristocrats and commoners. The popular welcome given to Seretse by the Bulawayo as a whole sharply contrasted with widespread popular resentment of the traditional Phuti (Nkwato clan) aristocracy, of which of course Seretse was hereditary chief. People particularly resented the revival of the prospects of Tshekedi's 'Rametsana' followers. In the words of the vociferous Dikoko Konche, 'he could not eat what he had already vomited.' People also resented the cockiness of the alternative Phuti rulers in the interregnum, notably Seretse's agent Peto Sekgoma, who had been 'in gaol wearing shorts, but now he is in comfort like the others, while we continue to suffer.' 52

Seretse went along, albeit somewhat uneasily, with the revival of 'tribalism' among the Bangwato in the form of tributary labour and exaction of patronal dues. He was expected to employ, and did indeed employ, large numbers of unsalaried traditional retainers - in his household, on his ploughing lands, and particularly at his cattle-posts. He also employed regimental tribute labour in building his house, as well as receiving tribute in cattle and goods through his agent Peto. Yet he proved to be lukewarm about the more general raising of 'tribal' labour. He waited two months before publicly endorsing Rasebolai's January 1957 call for tribute labour to re-build the royal cattle kraal next to the kgotla. Even then he referred all complaints and queries to Rasebolai.53

Seretse was also notorious for sitting in on court cases in kgotla but then withdrawing before Rasebolai summed up, thus distancing himself from the judgements given.54

Seretse warded off but apparently did not completely alienate commoners who came petitioning him to use his power and influence against the Phuti rulers. Some of the most pressing petitioners were Zionists and Apostolics, members of...
independent African churches complaining about the ecclesiastical monopoly of the London Missionary Society as the only church permitted in Gammangwato. Today Zionists and Apostolics often attribute their liberation from persecution to the return of Kgosi Seretse in 1956.5" The truth is rather more prosaic. Seretse seems at first to have shared the ideas of his cousin Lenyeletse, who believes in freedom of worship and greater tolerance on the part of the local administration towards religion.56 But Seretse's patience snapped when Zionists tried to take over his house in the centre of Serowe for prayers in January 1957. He expelled them from his house as dreamers. He told them that he had heard that the men among them were adulterers, and 'that the Zionists were against the law and that they should clear out [but] come again to greet him when he was not so angry.'57 Seretse, never an active church-goer, was heard to say that new religious bodies were only acceptable in Gammangwato if they built schools or hospitals. The issue of admitting new mission churches to the Reserve came up for discussion among Bangwato leaders in April 1957, *with a view to filling the vacuum which is at present filled by separationist sects.*5 It was popularly understood that Tshekedi backed the Roman Catholics, who had educated his sons. Seretse was assumed to be backing the Anglicans, as his wife was an active Anglican. Rasebolai was rumoured to be backing the Bantu Methodists ('Donkey Church') of South Africa. Be that as it may, in June 1957 Rasebolai announced the admission of only Roman Catholic and Anglican missions to the Bangwato Reserve - on condition that they provided medical services or education. A Zionist called Mpedi stood up in kgotla and challenged this decision. He called it a plot to maintain Phuti aristocratic control of religion. This in turn provoked an unusual outburst from Seretse, who asserted that Anglicans and Roman Catholics 'respect Tswana Law and Custom, and they were not like Zionists who were ruled by "Spirits" and drank ash and water and who disobeyed the law.' Meanwhile the decline of the L.M.S. state church in Serowe continued unabated. The 'Wives of Serowe' were said to be disobeying their husbands by abandoning the L.M.S. for Zionist and Apostolic congregations. By October 1957, only 80 people attended the Sunday service at the L.M.S. 'cathedral' in Serowe, while almost twice that number attended just one Apostolic church in the town.9 Seretse was encouraged to accept the revival of 'tribalism' (or as Bangwato like Motsete preferred, 'feudalism') by Peto Sekgoma. Peto continued to act as Seretse's agent in business affairs until December 1958. It was Peto who dealt with recalcitrant Tswapong tribute workers and who disciplined indolent immigrant Barotse (Malozo) workers on the Chadibe farm near the Tuli Block, which Seretse took over from Tshekedi in 1957. It was possibly also Peto who was sent to deal with troublesome women harvesters from the traditionally servile village of Paje, who were demanding payment for working on Seretse's Taulkome lands in 1958.60
Basarwa ('Bushmen', Khoe or 'San') herders on Seretse's remote cattleposts were less likely to be troublesome. But Seretse was not content to leave all his cattle with 'family group[s] of Bushmen who herd them in return for free milk, the use of the beasts for draft and, occasionally, the gift of a calf.' 61 Seretse was determined to manage livestock more scientifically and labour more humanely. He soon learned, as his uncle and grandfather had done before him, that a profitable cattle business could only be conducted by constant touring to supervise livestock and labour. Seretse began to rely less on Peto as his managing agent, and himself took to touring cattle-posts and overseeing the trucking of cattle on the railway.62

Peto Sekgoma was a marked man for the colonial authorities, as he was 'the most dangerous ... of the old gang'; and they were anxious for his demise, portraying him as a figure of inherent corruption. The authorities noted with glee that Seretse was apparently not pleased when he toured his cattle-posts with Peto soon after his return home in 1956. But Peto seems to have fobbed off Seretse's suspicions about lost and strayed livestock.63 Peto was also suspected of manipulating rivalry among Bakalanga headmen in the Bokalaka (Bokalanga) sub-district, taking his cut from cattle presented to Seretse by Headman Mathangwane. This was part of Mathangwane's bid to be recognized as first in line among Bakalanga clan headmen or subchiefs in Bokalaka.

The can of worms for 'the old gang' - Peto and Keaboka - was decisively opened in June 1957. The Serowe white trader Harry Parr had decided to retire to the coast in Durban, so he approached Seretse for the return of a loan of £4 000 given to Seretse's cause in 1952. Seretse was acutely embarrassed, because he had known nothing about the loan taken out in his name. After appealing for an end to all 'tribal collections' on his behalf, he put pressure on Peto and Keaboka to repay Parr. Peto's response made matters worse. Peto induced loyal Bakalanga 'tribesmen' to gather in Sebina, to render tribute to Seretse in oxen and to Ruth in groundnuts."

The colonial authorities were infuriated at such blatant political interference in local administration, and must have made their fury known to Seretse. Things started to go wrong for Seretse during the cold winter of mid-1957. He had fallen sick and had been taken to the Serowe hospital in May-June, suffering from what was provisionally diagnosed as Bright's Disease - a set of symptoms involving inflammation of the kidneys, retention of water in the body, and loss of protein in the urine. He recovered by July, but Millard noted with distress that Seretse 'seems to have lost much of the vitality and good cheer which he had on his return to the Territory.' African people, at least in Francistown, were speculating whether Ruth would return to England if Seretse were to die. Periodic bouts of such illness and depression, significantly sometimes set off by feasting on the red meat relished by Seretse and his father before him, were to dog Seretse until diabetes was diagnosed in 1960. Seretse found himself cast into a wilderness of uncertainty between about 1957 and 1959-60, from which he sought escape by attending to his ranching interests. In later years he characterized this period as being 'when I was at the cattle-post.'65
By August 1957 the High Commissioner had accepted the Bangwato constitutional proposals of April, and Bangwato leaders were touring the sub-districts 'selling the new councils' In September the sub-districts elected their Area Councils by show of hands in village kgotlas.

Restraining popular demand for his automatic nomination as chairman of the Tribal Council, Seretse expressed his pleasure about becoming his own man in Bangwato politics. He was quoted by the London Observer as saying: 'I think the people now understand that I don't intend to be chief again.' He wanted to be recognized as a leader of his people on the basis of talent and not birth. Some people in Gammangwato took Seretse at his word and began to judge him as an individual based on his actions and the views he expressed. Though Seretse maintained his popularity as 'a clever man' with outlying Bakalanga and Bakhurutshe, some people closer to the centres of power - such as K.T. Motsete - began to dismiss Seretse as 'no good for the people.'

Motsete complained that Seretse had berated those who still called for him as kgosi: he had told them, 'You are killing me with your nonsense.' He had taken football from the people by surrounding the Serowe ground with a hedge and charging entry, and had ticked off football teams for unsportsmanlike play - for getting angry when beaten. His wife was also undermining small vendors by monopolizing the sale of refreshments at the ground.

Nor were relations good with the Malekantwa workers who made desultory progress in constructing Seretse's house. To add insult to the injury of his living like a European rather than a Mongwato, not only was his housewarming party largely limited to whites but Seretse and Lenyeletse had shushed a large group of Malekantwa women who approached the house at night, singing and dancing his praises.

Seretse was even being satirized in popular song. People at Palapye composed a song entitled 'Nna le Rrangwane' (Me and My Uncle), to ridicule the way in which Seretse always invoked Tshekedi when he began speeches in kgotla. Seretse had joined Tshekedi in Bulawayo in September 1957, to pursue mineral negotiations with the Rhodesian (later Roan) Selection Trust, as well as talk with Maripe, Nkomo and various meat marketers. On returning through the border, Seretse had a row with Rhodesian customs officers at Plumtree because he dared to use the public toilet, reserved for Europeans.

Further anti-Phuti sentiments were aroused when Tshekedi and Rasebolai attempted to rig re-elections for the Serowe Area Council, to eliminate nonliterate candidates. People also began to realize that the Area elections had done nothing to replace Tshekedi's Bo-Rametsana place-men as Area subchiefs (Subordinate African Authorities); and that the Area and Tribal Councils would be merely advisory to the sub-chief and Rasebolai as African Authority at Serowe. But the dawn of 'local democracy' was not entirely illusory. Representatives elected from Area Councils onto the main Tribal Council included vociferous characters such as L.D. Raditladi, Peto Sekgoma, and Lenyeletse as well as Gaolese (brother of Kenneth) Koma. In the view of the Northern Divisional
Intelligence Committee five members of the new Tribal Council, led by Raditladi, constituted 'a firm toe-hold' of the African National Congress in Bechuanaland. The old world of colonialism seemed to be bursting at the seams, with much talk of newly independent Ghana, and of African nationalist developments in the Union and the Federation and even in Basutoland, as well as the new 'Sputnik' star put in the night-sky by the Soviet Union on October 4th, 1957. Colonial intelligence sources became very worried about the circulation of Pan-Africanist literature and the loud reception of Radio Moscow on local short-wave radios. Events in South Africa began to touch more closely on Bechuanaland. Two Batswana, 'Fish' Keitseng and Motsamai Mpho, were arraigned before the great A.N.C. 'Treason Trial' Then, over Christmas 1957, South African police shot four people dead in demonstrations against women's pass-laws a mere six kilometres east of the B.P. border. The trickle of Bapedi and Bakhrutshhe refugees from the Northern and Western Transvaal threatened to become a flood. The Johannesburg Bantu World newspaper carried a report of the refounding of the Bamangwato National Congress in January 1958. The Bechuanaland police identified it as an 'A.N.C. cell' at Palapye. K.T. Motsete, who had no compunctions about talking to police agents, told them that the B.P. African Congress, nominally led by L.D. Raditladi, was based on a core of 'young to middle [aged] intelligentsia' - notably Messrs Tamocha, Mothobi, Morupisi and Motshidisi. Seretse could no longer be regarded as a fellow-traveller, since he had become alienated from Raditladi as well as from Motsete. Seretse's friend Goareng Mosinyi was also at odds with Gaolese Koma of the local congress movement. The point at issue between Goareng Mosinyi and Gaolese Koma illustrates some of the contradictions within contemporary African nationalism. Koma was considered the most dangerous or anti-European nationalist in Mahalapye. He led a group of small traders called the African Traders Association, who were also eager to accumulate cattle holdings. They were wholly behind the colonial government's water development policy, opening up new lands for cattle by drilling bore-holes (artesian wells) in dry areas. On the other hand, the government's water policy was resisted by the 'Bamangwato blue-bloods' led by Rasebolai. They objected to the conversion of their hunting lands into cattle ranching territory. Mosinyi was the 'blueblood' spokesman in the Mahalapye kgotla against Koma. As elsewhere in the world, traditionalist aristocrats were jealous guardians of their inherited environment from the depredations of an acquisitive petty bourgeoisie. Seretse may have have had some sympathy for the former, but was to throw in his lot with the latter. A preliminary meeting of the Bangwato Tribal Council, in the first few days of 1958, elected Rasebolai as Chairman, Tshekedi as Secretary, and Seretse as Vice-Chairman. Intelligence sources picked up resentment against the Big Three monopolizing leadership positions, as they would inhibit free speech in the Council. But this is not to say that Seretse or Tshekedi were unpopular. There was
strong approval of Seretse and his wife because they taught people sports and other skills. To quote (an intelligence report of) beer drinkers at Tonota:

Tshekedi was clever; he helped the people, but he did not want to make others clever. This was not good, because if he died no one could take his place. He should teach others like Seretse does.74

The Big Three flew to London at the end of January 1958, with little prior announcement beyond raising funds by yet another levy on the people. (This may have been the occasion when his mother-in-law parted the journalists at Heathrow with a stentorian cry of 'Seretse!' from the back of the scrum.) The journey gave rise to all sorts of rumours. In fact it was intended to follow up mineral negotiations with the Rhodesian Selection Trust. But the BBC Overseas Service put out a hare-brained news item that Seretse was going to London to be recognised as chief.71

Seretse stayed on in London longer than expected, for family reasons. Ruth's mother had been recently widowed. Both her daughters were in Africa - Muriel in Northern Rhodesia, Ruth in Bechuanaland. The Khamas were building a large house in Serowe and Ruth was four or five months pregnant: she would need help with the growing family. It seemed logical, therefore, that Mrs Williams should go and live at Serowe. At the end of February, Seretse approached the C.R.O. for an advance of £200 from his allowance to cover Mrs Williams's removal expenses.76

On his return home, Seretse made his first contribution to colonial parliamentary life in Bechuanaland, when he attended first the bi-racial Joint Advisory Council (J.A.C.) and then the African Advisory Council (A.A.C.) as a delegate of the Bangwato. Illness had precluded his attendance in 1957. Both bodies had also moved the location of their deliberations, from Mafikeng to Lobatse, in deference to Seretse, who could not cross the border as a prohibited immigrant in the Union. Much in the style of Tshekedi, who also attended, Seretse made frequent contributions to debate in the J.A.C. in April and the A.A.C. in May. In the J.A.C. he supported the call for a Legislative Council (Legco) made by Tshekedi and Russell England. He also made a plea for Bechuanaland to stand apart from its neighbours in race relations: 'We should try to formulate a policy of our own which is probably quite unique to us ... even teaching those countries which profess to be more advanced than ourselves.'

It was a typical Seretse speech, with humorous asides punctuating its flow. He called for democratic leadership based on ability, not race. He conceded that the Legco should initially have limited powers: underscoring the point with a jocular remark that displays considerable prescience 'I certainly should hate to be Prime Minister just now.'77

Seretse repeated his advocacy of a Legco in the African Advisory Council. Here he also spoke at length on an issue he had raised by proxy at the 1957 session - the need for extension of medical services. He wanted recruitment of African doctors from other countries, who after all were cheaper than Europeans and more willing to come. He wanted special attention to
epidemiology and to mental health, and looked to the spread of 'scientific healing' to counter the spread of 'false prophets' and their new churches. Later in the session, Seretse commented on the conflict of Setswana and Western laws. He then proposed the motion that a Legco should be established. The speech is interesting because it shows the thoughtful way in which Seretse approached an argument, with a series of pre-emptive strikes against possible counter-arguments. He began by recognizing that there had been some enlightened autocrats in history, both African and European. He then acknowledged that 'we [in the B.P.] can claim to be freer and happier than most people in most neighbouring countries.' But, he added: There is one thing that one cannot quell, and it is the natural aspirations of peoples to take part in the affairs that concern them ... to assist the Government in administration, and that means active participation rather than in an only advisory capacity ... I do not mean African people only. I mean every person who lives in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Why was Bechuanaland being denied a Legco, 'in spite of our loyalty and devotion" when 'younger countries' elsewhere in the Commonwealth already had one? The answer was implicit in his next statement: 'In my opinion we have no need to look either to Rhodesia or the Union, if we can start an experiment or [political] scheme of our own, which perhaps may be a lesson to others.' Lastly, during the A.A.C. session, Seretse spoke in support of Tshekedi's motion that racial discrimination be expunged from the civil service. Like other speakers he underlined the grievances of African civil servants over discriminatory pay and promotion, and over the favouring of European recruits with little knowledge or experience of the country. But he was arguably more subtle in grabbing the attention of the colonial masters on this 'distasteful' subject: I have not come across a single ['Government official in the territory'] who has personally advocated racial discrimination ... The most disheartening thing is that although on the whole there seems to be a general feeling against discrimination on the grounds of race, nothing practical is being done ... This is a sore point, I think, in the minds of most Africans." Seretse Khama had now made his mark in the territorial or 'national' politics of the Bechuanaland Protectorate - marking out the main points of the political programme which he would eventually pursue as a party politician.

It is strange therefore that Seretse remained silent, though in attendance, for the next two sessions of the J.A.C., held in November 1958 and April 1959. One might suppose that he had been 'sat upon' by the vociferous Tshekedi, to whom he was obviously conceding leadership. But his new quiescence may have had deeper roots. Seretse was after all, as he had told the J.A.C., now 37. It seems to have been the period of a mid-life crisis. Ruth Khama gave birth to boisterous boy twins on June 9th, 1958. The second out of the womb was considered more senior in African tradition, having expelled the junior one first, and was named Tshekedi Stanford a gesture of the reconciliation
with Seretse's uncle. The other child was named Anthony Paul, after Seretse's old friend, the English politician Tony Benn. The christening of the twins, seven weeks after their birth, proved somewhat problematic. The L.M.S. minister refused to allow an Anglican baptism in the Serowe church, despite its being the national church building of the Bangwato. The minister eventually relented under pressure from the District Commissioner, agreeing to a joint Congregational-Anglican service being held. Ruth's mother, Mrs Williams, now arrived to help look after the twins - though she did not settle in Serowe permanently until July 1959. Intelligence sources at Serowe noted, with surprise, the lack of 'traditional' popular opinion that the birth of twins was a bad omen. They concluded that most people now felt neutral towards Seretse, rather than hostile or highly supportive as before.79 People soon learnt that the golden age had not arrived with the new Bangwato Tribal Council. Members of the council felt inhibited facing the Big Three at meetings. Non-members complained that, unlike at traditional meetings held in open kgotla, they were now cut out from popular participation in politics by the closed meetings of the council. There was, all the same, a feeling of increased confidence and self-esteem in the air. Colonial officials noticed that white males were no longer addressed as Morena ('lord'), but simply by the customary polite term rra ('sir', i.e. 'father').0 Seretse made his contributions to meetings of the new Bangwato Tribal Council in June and July 1958, showing particular concern with cattle ranching and marketing. A false rumour went round that Seretse had secured an export order for 13,000 head to go to Israel. At the August session, Seretse joined Lenyeletse in deploiring 'funny Zion churches,' and pointed to the environmental dangers of commercial firewood cropping without reafforestation. Rasebolai was not keen on the Tribal Council and was even less keen on the Serowe Area Council, which he declined to convene. So Seretse found himself more and more in the chair at Tribal Council meetings, and less and less publicly contributing his thoughts to debate. Intelligence sources, not necessarily wholly accurate, quote Seretse as telling two visitors in December 1958: 'Councils are a failure and will not work, and that as far as I am concerned will never work.' But then Seretse seems to have become generally very depressed by this time.8' While Tsheskedi pushed ahead with mineral negotiations, and numerous other projects, Seretse took a back seat in Bangwato politics. He was also outshone by Lenyeletse, who began organizing the employees of white traders in Serowe in May 1958. The Serowe Workers Union was eventually registered, with Tsheskedi's help, as the B.P. Workers' Union a year later in 1959.82 Serowe and the railway villages of Mahalapye, Palapye and Tonota were the centre of a nationalist ferment that gripped the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1958-59. Besides the B.P. Workers' Union, there were the activities of the B.P. African Traders Association, the B.P. African Civil Service Association, the B.P. African Teachers Association, and the 'B.P. African Congress'.
Batswana were also being organized abroad in 1958-59, in nationalist welfare bodies that represented the interests of migrant workers and aspirant entrepreneurs. There was the Bechuana Cultural Club of Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia led by Albert Motsumi, the Protectorate Batswana National Association of Johannesburg in South Africa led by Motsamai Mpho, and the long-established 'Sons of Bechuanaland' in the Cape Province of South Africa led by Kenneth Nkhwa.

Trade unionism, the B.P. police cynically claimed, only appealed to 'a rapidly growing group of pseudo intellectuals in the main centres of population.' It certainly appealed to relatively educated workers who were, in local terms, the aristocracy of labour. Salaried employment in the Bangwato Reserve was largely limited to white-owned shops. There was no question of organizing unskilled workers and those not in formal paid employment in Bechuanaland, who worked in the households or cattle-posts of richer Batswana such as Seretse and Lenyeletse.

The organization of labour in Serowe was given its biggest boost in 1959, when 112 Bangwato migrant workers came back from Southern Rhodesia. They had been dismissed after a strike at the Kariba dam construction site on the Zambezi. They returned home 'full of the growing spirit of Africanism' picked up from working with Nyasa and Northern Rhodesians. 'We have fought for our freedom whilst you people stayed at home,' said one.

Meanwhile Seretse was developing other preoccupations. He was growing desperate about making a profit from his cattle business. And he was increasingly tied up in organizing weekend sports in Serowe in collaboration with Lenyeletse.

Seretse was team manager for both football and boxing teams, as well as for the Serowe African Cricket Club. Fundraising for these various sports activities overlapped with raising the money for Ruth Khama's pet project, a Social Centre for Serowe. Peter Bormann, a 'coloured' teacher and social worker from Bulawayo, who had been teaching in a Serowe primary school, was chosen as the centre's warden. The local colonial authorities were gratified when Bormann, regarded as a quarrelsome roughneck with no respect for authority, was given the sack for getting too obviously drunk in the 'dry' town during Christmas 1958. Together with Lenyeletse, Bormann and others provided a lively weekend party scene. This was described by Abram Moiloa, exiled kgosi of the Bakhrutshe from South Africa and a man of Tshekedi’s puritan stamp, as 'loafing' - 'drinking brandy and playing with young girls.' Peto Sekgoma, a convinced prohibitionist on the liquor question, would have been equally disparaging.

Seretse was suffering acute financial embarrassment by October 1958. He was being sued by the builders Promnitz Brothers for £1 800 outstanding on his as yet unfinished house. The banks were refusing to honour his cheques; and he was obliged to take the drastic measure of delaying the payment of his own employees.

Seretse had been relying on income from cattle sales to commercial buyers on the line-of-rail. This was to supplement, and ultimately replace, his allowance from
the British government. The allowance had been fixed at the rate of £1 000 (down from £1 100, but the same as Rasebolai Kgamane's colonial salary) a year for five years after his return home - in other words up until 1960-61. Provision was also made for a sum up to a maximum of £2 500 to cover the capital costs of his family's removal and resettlement. Other capital costs - opening up a ranching business and building a new house in Serowe - would be covered by the sale of the house at Addiscombe in England. (Its value was estimated at £2 500 after paying off the mortgage.) For any further expenditure Seretse would depend on profits from cattle ranching.

Two years after settling back home Seretse's capital costs were overrunning, and his income from cattle sales was negligible. Cattle owners in Bechuanaland were suffering from an embargo on exports imposed by South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. Ostensibly for reasons of disease control, the embargo was generally acknowledged to be motivated by protectionist ranching interests in those countries.88

When he was first strapped for cash, in September 1957, Seretse got the British authorities to pay out his monthly allowance as an annual lump sum. In June 1958 he appealed for a one-off payment of the balance of all his allowance to 1960-61. The C.R.O. dallied over the issue, but agreed to pay out in October 1958:

As the only grounds on which we could refuse, or suggest some variation, would be that we wished to keep some control over Seretse.

As Fawcus [Government Secretary] points out ... Seretse is aware of this and has already made complaints about it.

Seretse pressed for immediate payment of the final balance, and the C.R.O. agreed to rush payment of the remaining £2 583 by the end of the current financial year on March 31st, 1958. Before being made aware that Seretse also had health problems, a C.R.O. official had minuted: 'My impression of Seretse is that he is easy going and probably not very efficient in all his affairs, particularly financial.'9

Seretse was too ill to travel to Francistown in September 1958, to bid farewell to Sir Percival Liesching as High Commissioner. This may also have been a diplomatic counter-snub to one who had so often made clear his distaste for the Bangwato.

Stories spread of Seretse reaching a peak of irascibility over his financial difficulties in November 1958. He finally broke with Peto Sekgoma, accusing Peto of having pocketed money and cattle 'while I was in England.' Seretse was also said to be at odds with Rasebolai and with Tshekedi. Tshekedi was rumoured to be plotting against Seretse once again because Seretse was accusing him of cattle theft.

The truth is that Bangwato politics were in turmoil at the time. Tshekedi's most trusted administrative colleague over the years, Peter M. Sebina, had just been dismissed from the tribal administration for corruption. Accusations and counter-accusations were flying between Peto, Keaboka and Serogola, as well as between the Big Three.0
By December 1958 Seretse was reported as feeling 'very ill.' Bouts of illness alternated with binges of eating and drinking. Seretse's doctor told him not to drink alcohol or play football. But he did both, apparently under the influence of Lenyeletse. Ruth was reportedly furious with both of them.

By late March 1959, when the journalist John Redfern arrived to follow up the Ruth and Seretse Khama story, Seretse was home in bed. Ruth was all charm and seemed to Redfern to have lost her former prickliness. The house had two 'glossy magazine type bathrooms' though the water for them was still not piped in. The water had to be trucked up the hill from the town. Ruth was also having misgivings about sending Jackie to boarding school in Rhodesia, in case she was bullied:

Children can be very cruel you know. When Jacqueline is older she may be lonely - here, where there is not very much mixing, or abroad.

I hope the world grows up while Jacqueline is growing up.91 A pessimist in 1958 could have argued that the tide of history was still running against liberation and liberalization in the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The Tati Company was intensifying its apartheid-style township removals in Francistown. South African Railways had instituted full racial discrimination at Mahalapye station, its northernmost base. White settlers in the Tuli and Ghanzi Blocks were calling for apartheid's racial policies to be extended to their parts of Bechuanaland, or for their incorporation into South Africa and South West Africa.92

But there were also indications that the tide might turn. The repatriation of striking workers from Kariba was an indicator of dramatic developments north of the Zambezi. There was also a changing of the guard in the British colonial administration of the B.P. in 1958-59, as men with more liberal ideas took over. David Robinson became District Commissioner in Serowe; Peter Fawcus became Resident Commissioner in Mafikeng; and Sir John (Redcliffe) Maud became High Commissioner in Pretoria. The three men, however, got on better with Seretse than they did with each other.

Robinson had been at Oxford like Seretse, and knew him best of all. 'Robbie', tall and boyish with crew-cut hair, looked more like an astronaut than a conventional D.C.. He was an intelligent man with a relaxed jokey manner who was always alert to the sensitivities of others. Old people still recall him today as the best colonial administrator they ever knew - a real human being.

The atmosphere in Serowe became altogether more relaxed, more detached from the growing tensions of the sub-continent. By May 1959, Seretse's 'Miscellaneous' football team had a roster of regular fixtures with a local team of government officers both white and black - an unthinkable phenomenon a year earlier and unimaginable elsewhere in southern Africa.93

The New Year of 1959 offered much hope to people in the Bangwato Reserve and the Bechuanaland Protectorate in general. Mineral negotiations were progressing well. People also had good reason to believe that, at last, the year would see the replacement of the old 'Rametsana' crop of Tshekedi supporters as Subordinate African Authorities (sub-chiefs). For the first time in many years there was
willing communal labour for tidying up Serowe. In April 1959 people turned up to fill in erosion gulleys which scarred the town and acted as trash traps.94 There were also reports that South African Railways would soon be replaced by Rhodesia Railways along the Bechuanaland line-of-rail. April 1959 saw the announcement that Bechuanaland would follow the path blazed by Basutoland in 1958, with the promise at last of a Legco which would lead to territorial self-government. The process of British decolonization, which had been glimpsed with Seretse's return home in 1956, was given a new lease of life. As Tshkedi's friend Guy Clutton-Brock was to remark in a book on Nyasaland: 'The dawn breaks suddenly in Africa.' (Clutton-Brock was helping Tshkedi to set up a cooperative agricultural scheme in Pikwe in 1959, but was briefly imprisoned in the Central African Emergency declared in February.)95

Though not fully recovered to good health, Seretse was in good form addressing the May 26th-28th, 1959, session of the African Advisory Council. In typical light-hearted and slightly shocking style, he raised doubts about retaining the South African matriculation system in secondary schools. As South African 'matric' was not good enough to enter a British university, he said, would it be good enough to enter a university in Castro's Cuba? He also spoke at length about the need for police 'to guard civil liberties,' and 'to be made to realise that their job is to help and to advise, not to make enemies of people.' They should not be like South African police who considered themselves above the law.96

Significantly, Tshkedi was not present to cramp Seretse's style at this session of the A.A.C. Tshkedi had been rushed from a Bulawayo hospital to the London Clinic, where he was dying of kidney disease. Fawcus reported that Seretse was genuinely distressed to hear of his uncle's condition, and wanted to fly to his bedside. But Seretse was kept in Serowe by the need to attend the grand signing ceremony of the copper mining agreement, to be signed by the 'Tribe' and the Rhodesian Selection Trust in the Arthington Hall on June 2nd, 1959. The 'Bamangwato Concession' gave Tshkedi particular satisfaction, as he had succeeded in recruiting a genuine British-American company rather than the misnamed Anglo-American Corporation, which was in fact South African owned. This was the promised land for which Tshkedi had worked so hard, but was never to enjoy. After the signing, Seretse invited the signatories up to his house on the hill for refreshments. The white Rhodesian managers of R.S.T. sat uneasily around the living room with drinks in hand, in what may have been their first ever venture in a black man's house. A group of Bangwato councillors arrived, standing quietly at a distance awaiting the customary permission to enter the yard. This gave rise to a typically wicked piece of Seretse humour, designed to disconcert his guests still further. He rose from his chair and walked to the screen-netting of the stoep, saying in a loud aside to his friend David Robinson: 'I suppose I'd better tell those natives they are allowed inside.' The R.S.T. men hardly knew where to look, while 'Robbie' brayed himself silly with laughter.97
After a quick tour of R.S.T. prospecting sites, Seretse flew to London on June 6th, with a copy of the 'Bamangwato Concession' for Tshekedi to sign as a witness. He was one of the five people at his uncle’s bedside when Tshekedi died on the 10th.

Tshekedi’s last words are said to have been addressed to Seretse: 'It is finished. Let there be peace.'

The next day Seretse was taken to Westminster to see the Earl of Home, who was still the Commonwealth Relations minister. That Seretse was not a well man is confirmed by a C.R.O. official, David Scott, who accompanied him walking across Westminster Square to the Houses of Parliament. Halfway across the square it became evident that Seretse was in extreme discomfort and needed to go to a lavatory immediately. So they caught a taxi to take them the last few hundred metres. In his memoirs David Scott remarks that it was a symptom of the condition which was to eventually kill Seretse. Seretse's survival for 20 years more was to be 'a remarkable bonus for the whole of southern Africa.'

Seretse returned home for the burial of Tshekedi Khama on June 17th, 1959. It was the biggest funeral in Serowe since the death of Khama the Great in 1923. Besides 20 000 Bangwato gathered from all parts of the Reserve and from abroad, there were sizeable groups of mourners from Basutoland and from the various Barolong chiefdoms of South Africa, as well as 'Africans from Johannesburg, Bulawayo and all parts of B.P.' There were numerous colonial officials, white businessmen, and all types of sympathizers who had worked closely with Tshekedi.

In his speech at the funeral, Seretse dismissed renewed speculation that he would now claim his right to be kgosi. Rather more sensational was the main funeral oration delivered by Dr S.M. Molema. He was a close relative of Tshekedi’s widow, and had the unusual distinction of having been a premier spokesman for African nationalism in both Bechuanaland and South Africa for almost four decades. He had been a vocal member of the B.P.’s African Advisory Council since 1921, and at the same time, from his base as a physician at Mafikeng, had been a leading figure in the African National Congress of South Africa. Molema praised Tshekedi as a man who had seen clearly through the evils of colonialism and white domination, which must some day soon inevitably disappear. The effect of the oration was electric, at least on the whites present, who had never heard a respectable African leader being so candid - according to a young district officer at the time called Brian Egner. Egner came to see Molema’s speech as a watershed in the political history of Botswana.

Both Fawcus and Robinson were prepared to countenance Seretse now being installed as kgosi of the Bangwato, and the C.R.O. was prepared for the eventuality. Fawcus considered Seretse to be an 'honourable' man. But he also thought Seretse too 'lazy and unambitious' in local affairs, and too interested in 'national affairs', to be bothered with taking on the everyday hassles of tribal authority.

Mrs Williams arrived to finally settle in Serowe on July 11th, 1959, taking her place as the grandmother in the Seretse Khama household.
Soon afterwards a reporter of the South African Argus group of newspapers arrived to chase up the whiff of scandal. The reporter asked around about Seretse's drinking habits, and about the health of the marriage. Seretse and Ruth refused to see the reporter, and other friends formed a protective ring. 'Am I having a baby or a divorce this year?', was Seretse's characteristic retort to such investigators.

Seretse got down to work preparing for a full and frank meeting of the Bangwato Tribal Council on July 14th. The big issue was whether to keep or abolish the traditional prohibition on liquor consumption and beer brewing in the Bangwato Reserve. Several companies were applying for licences to sell beer and liquor. Robinson reported to his superiors that the 'Old Guard' managed to put off the evil day of decision at least for a few months, referring 'piously but unrealistically to [the] sacred nature of Khama's law.'104 But a few 'unrestricted drinkers' including Seretse, were approved by name.

On July 29th Seretse drank so-called European beer - the only two brands then available being 'Castle' and 'Lion' - when it was provided free for purchasers after a cattle sale in the Tuli Block. Seretse had just bought two Aberdeen Angus bulls. Unbeknown to Seretse, there was an Afrikaner farmer named Vermeulen in the beer tent who was strongly objecting to this 'kaffir' drinking white man's beer. There was also a South African cabinet minister present, P.M.K. le Roux, an extreme right-winger. When Seretse was told about this later on, he said he was very disappointed not to have been told about le Roux's presence at the time. He said he would have walked up to le Roux with his hand out to be shaken, and he would have said: 'Welcome to the Bechuanaland Protectorate.' He would have been interested to hear what sort of reply le Roux would have made.

A few months later Seretse vetoed the attempt of another South African cabinet minister, Ben Schoeman, to hunt in the Bangwato Reserve. He also made plain his opposition to the placing of a South African navigation beacon at Mahalapye, for the guidance of aircraft flying between Johannesburg and Luanda in Portuguese Angola.05

On August 1st, 1959, Seretse was elected by the Tribal Council as Tribal Secretary, to replace Tshekedi. In accepting the position, he put paid to rumours that he would be becoming kgosi. Seretse took charge of files of the Tribal Secretariat and immersed himself in office work. In so doing, he supplanted the other obvious candidate for Tribal Secretary, L.D. Raditladi. Raditladi had to be content with becoming recording secretary to the Tribal Council rather than a secretary of state.

After the April 1959 announcement of an impending Legco, L.D. Raditladi had formally founded a political party, the Bechuanaland Protectorate Federal Party, in expectation of elections for self-government. The party enrolled as its members people like K.T. Motsete and Lenyeletse Seretse at Serowe, Phillip Matante at Francistown and Gaolese Koma at Mahalapye, and a core of teachers including M.L.A. Kgasa and B.C. Thema, both from the south but now teaching at Moeng College. The B.P.EP. also received moral support from the Basutoland Congress Party which was looking forward to popular elections and self-government in
Basutoland. But the B.P.F.P. had great difficulty in holding the allegiance of the radicals loosely associated with the idea of a 'B.P. African Congress' - who were wary of yet another Raditladi venture.

Raditladi himself undermined his party a few months after its founding by making clear his preference for status in the Bangwato administration to a role in fledgling national politics. In September 1959 he accepted the position of sub-chief at Mahalapye. Raditladi's preference for tribal authority alienated Motsete in particular, who now broke away from the B.P.F.P. Motsete was also disenchanted with the party's deference towards Seretse Khama as the future natural 'head' or prime minister of the country. Motsete saw this as outmoded 'feudalism': a version of the popular belief held among Bangwato that 'in future Seretse will be king of all Bechuanaland.'

Seretse himself 'tended to treat the party as a joke.' The B.P.F.P. never flourished. It seems to have become somnambulent by December 1959, though it was not to be dissolved for a couple more years.

Meanwhile Seretse Khama was receiving pledges of loyalty from Batswana elsewhere who saw him as the natural successor to Tshekedi as national leader. In September 1959 he received a letter from Motsamai Mpho in Johannesburg. Mpho, himself a Moyei from Ngamiland, had no 'tribal' reason at all to support Seretse. He was also one of the accused in the marathon A.N.C. Treason Trial being held in the Johannesburg high court. On this occasion he wrote as secretary of a 'newly formed business association, called the Protectorate Batswana National Association. Referring to the death of Tshekedi, he wrote:

We ask you Sir to step into his boots right now and to carry on with the plans you had together, those of developing the Protectorate. Be comforted. You are not alone, the whole Protectorate is with you. Bechuanaland is no more divided, it is one. Hence, we have formed this association to prove our unity.

Seretse also pushed through the appointment of a new generation of Subordinate African Authorities (sub-chiefs). This was an issue on which Tshekedi and
Rasebolai had been stalling for three years, to keep their 'Ramsetsana' place-men in office. "10 One of the first new appointees was L.D. Raditladi at Mahalapye. At meetings of the Joint Advisory Council in Lobatse in July and August 1959, Seretse was now brim-full of ideas. During the July meeting he pushed for an elected majority of 'unofficial' members in the Legco right from the start, with an Executive Council (Exco) of four members derived from the Legco - to act as trainee ministers of a Cabinet with real powers. (An idea taken up by government four years later.) He looked forward with eager expectation to devising a constitution that really suited the unique circumstances of the country. He was 'unhappy' about government proposals of 'communal representation' in the new Legco, which meant ten Africans representing a large majority and ten European elected members representing a tiny minority. While he conceded it might be politically expedient at this stage of constitutional development, he argued that there was no excuse for not having one Asian (Muslim) member as well. He was critical of allowing people with South African citizenship to vote in Legco elections, as South Africa was likely to become a republic without allegiance to the Queen. And he was particularly scathing about the capital, Mafikeng, still being outside its borders in South Africa, subject to 'the whims of the Union Government.'

Not surprisingly, Seretse was nominated to sit as one of the 'unofficial' members on the J.A.C.'s constitutional committee. Fawcus opened its meeting in August 1959. Following express orders from London, he slapped down all thoughts of 'responsible government' by a Legco with an 'unofficial' majority. It was, he said, 'not something for consideration at the present time, nor possibly even in the foreseeable future.' Both European and African members of the committee were taken aback, and further comments and suggestions were extremely restrained for the rest of the meeting. Seretse was less intimidated than the rest. He tried to ensure that at least the Exco would have some real powers. He also drew Fawcus's attention to the need for the Legco to have the capacity to deal with the dangers of 'the Territory's economic situation, its relations with neighbouring territories and conditions in Africa generally.' 12

When the full J.A.C. met again in October 1959, it was faced with recommendations from the constitutional committee that had been hi-jacked by its 'official' members. The proposed constitution was modelled very much along the lines of a small British Caribbean dependency which was never expected to attain independence.

The J.A.C. was cowed into accepting the constitutional recommendations en bloc with hardly any discussion. Seretse's main argument was for an adaptable electoral system to the Legco to accommodate different levels of 'democratic development' in different places. (The system of Area and Tribal Councils in the Bangwato Reserve was considered way ahead of other districts in democratic practice.)

Warming to the parliamentary style of the J.A.C., Seretse fell into the habit of making short interjections. He had to apologize at one stage for breaching
parliamentary procedure by having spoken while seated rather than standing. Perhaps he grew a little too garrulous and talked a little too loosely on occasion. Later in the session, when he was speaking on the need for a northern abattoir and for export markets, he talked of the need ‘to get rid of our produce.’

The constitutional proposals of 1959 show that official British policy in the Bechuanaland Protectorate had adopted the ‘doctrine of multi-racialism’, as espoused by the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland to the north. This helped to reinforce the general assumption among white settlers and officials that the B.P. would eventually join that Federation, perhaps in a position analogous to that of the Barotseland Protectorate in Northern Rhodesia. (‘Multi-racialism’ was of course inequitable if it entailed the equal distribution of resources between a settler minority or minorities and the indigenous majority. It implied equal black and non-black blocks in parliamentary representation, and also enormous disproportion on welfare and social services in state expenditure per head of population.)

While B.P. government officials were beginning to take ‘multi-racialism’ on board and to treat the idea immensely seriously, Seretse found it somewhat ludicrous. He was able to make this point when the British prime minister, Harold Macmillan, landed at Francistown airport on January 27th, 1960, en route to make his famous ‘Winds of Change’ speech in Cape Town.

In the great aircraft hangar of the Witwatersrand Native Labour (Recruiting) Association, Fawcus had lined up a long line of local dignitaries to meet Macmillan. Near the head of the line stood Seretse and Ruth Khama; stretching beyond them were alternately placed African and European members of the Joint Advisory Council. When Seretse was introduced to Macmillan, he pointed down the line and said it was just like a draughts board - black, white, black, white, black. Macmillan laughed heartily. Fawcus frowned, obviously confirmed in his opinion of Seretse’s lack of seriousness. "14 One of Macmillan’s official companions recalls: Inspired by memories of Cecil Rhodes, Moffat and Livingstone, Macmillan made a most admirable impromptu speech. He was still talking about Bechuanaland in the aircraft as we flew off towards Johannesburg. " 5

Chapter 8
POLITICIAN
1960–62

On 28th January [1960] Seretse went to Bulawayo to see Dr Shee about what he thought were ulcers. He had had an attack of severe stomach pain on his return from Thari Pilane’s funeral and was advised to go to Bulawayo for X-rays. The result of the X-rays was, it is believed, diagnosis of severe gastritis. Seretse was put on a strict diet, and advised to return for further tests in March. Despite apparently keeping to the diet, he had a further bad attack and was in bed for about a week during the middle of February. He had recovered by the time of the
Tribal Council finance meeting on 24th, when 'he looked fitter than he has done for many months ... appears probable that general health will continue to deteriorate unless he does less travelling and more dieting.”

1960 was the critical year for Seretse's health. It was to preclude him from any significant participation in the 'Year of Africa, which made him appear to be one of yesterday's men by-passed by history.

Intelligence sources added that Seretse's illness was due as much to overwork as to 'carousing' - presumably consumption of funeral meat as well as drink - in Mochudi. Seretse was trying to make his living as a commercial rancher, and was also spending his time clearing Tshekedi's 'massive legacy of unpaid bills' - in addition to official duties as Tribal Secretary. He had become a director, together with white businessmen such as Haskins and Kollenberg, of Bamangwato Auctioneers Pty (Ltd) in March 1960 - its main business being cattle. Another task taken on by Seretse was to act as some kind of agent for OvaHerero exiles from South West Africa.2

Much of Seretse's time in March and April 1960 was spent handing over Tshekedi's estate to Tshekedi's eldest son Leapeetswe, who had just returned from Ireland. Leapeetswe and his brother Sekgoma had been to school and college in Ireland, where they had gained the nicknames 'Peachy' and 'Secky' which were to stick with them for the rest of their lives. The names were given by their hosts, the author Christobel Bielenberg and her husband, who were friends of Tshekedi's through his connection with David Astor, the owner of The Observer newspaper. Leapeetswe had grown close to Seretse after Tshekedi's death, when he and his mother stayed at Seretse's house in Serowe. Leapeetswe had then gone back to Ireland but had unexpectedly returned a few months later, in February 1960. There was speculation that he suspected Seretse of peculation' of the Tshekedi Khama estate. But, as intelligence sources confirmed, this had no truth in it. Seretse and Leapeetswe spent many days touring Tshekedi's cattle-posts, a considerably greater number than Seretse's own. At the end of this trip, in April, Seretse handed over all documents and cheque books to his cousin. Leapeetswe also got on well with Lenyeletse: the two of them made history by being the first Africans to demand and receive service in the bar of the Palapye Hotel. The hotel was technically in the 100-yard-wide railway strip, where the ban on Africans drinking 'European' liquor had just been lifted, and not in the still 'dry' Bangwato Reserve.3

Political tensions elsewhere in southern Africa rose to boiling point in this period. On March 21st, 1960, South African police shot dead 67 demonstrators of the Pan Africanist Congress (P.A.C.) in Sharpeville, south of Johannesburg. Then, on April 9th, an English-speaking white farmer shot but failed to kill the South African Prime Minister, Hendrik Verwoerd, at the Rand Easter Show in Johannesburg.

The Sharpeville massacre of ordinary people, including children, mostly shot in the back while fleeing, raised sympathy for African nationalism among even the most conservative Africans in the B.P. The attempt on Hendrik Verwoerd's life led to widespread glee. The refugee flow from South Africa to Bechuanaland
once again began to increase. Macmillan's recent 'Winds of Change' speech of warning delivered to the South African parliament on February 3rd, 1960, had helped to distance British colonialism from the regime in South Africa. The release of Dr Banda from jail in Nyasaland in April also improved the British image in African eyes. The B.P. colonial administration was gratified to find its prestige enhanced rather than depleted in the eyes of the people, who contrasted it favourably with the oppressive government in South Africa. Though resentment against racial discrimination by whites against blacks within the B.P. was rising, the B.P. administration gained public approval by its sympathetic treatment of refugees. On the orders of the High and Resident Commissioners, the spirit of 'multi-racialism' was being spread assiduously by government administrative officers throughout the country. There were now regular sports fixtures between white and black sides in population centres, though the good humour of African supporters for their side could be somewhat barbed - with cries of encouragement such as 'Independence!' and 'Down with slavery!'4

The only places in Bechuanaland which shared the racial-proletarian tensions of South Africa and the Central African Federation were the border railway towns of Lobatse and Francistown - particularly Francistown. Christmas 1959 protests there against the rule of the Tati Company, over the enforcement of the company's monopoly of beer brewing on women beer brewers, found a leader in Phillip G. Matante. Matante (or Madande), who was of Barolong/Bakalanga origins from Matsiloje, had migrated to Johannesburg after military service as a sergeant-clerk in Lobatse during the Second World War. Returning to the B.P. in 1956, he had worked for the veterinary department around Kazungula for two years before settling in Francistown, where he became a trading-store clerk and a well-known preacher. 5

By February 1960 Matante had founded an organization called the Tati Cultural Society. The name harked back to L.D. Raditladi's *middle class* Francistown African Cultural Society of 1954, of which Matante had been an office holder. But the T.C.S., unlike the F.A.C.S., had an aggressively populist form, with strong participation from assertive women. The T.C.S. was also joined by people such as Richard Bogatsu, the well-known local 'agitator', who kept up a running commentary on southern African affairs for customers and friends at his trading store or 'restaurant' in nearby Tonota.

Meanwhile the pioneer nationalist figure L.D. Raditladi was by now preoccupied with his position as sub-chief of the Bangwato at Mahalapye, on the railway 220 kilometres to the south. There he came increasingly into conflict with local African nationalists, like Archie Tsoebebe and Richard Mannothoko, and he also lost touch with activists further abroad. The 'Sons of Bechuanaland' in the Cape province of South Africa continued to write to him, as if he were the leader of the nationalist movement in Bechuanaland, but Raditladi made no reply to their letters.

In the first few months of 1960 police security sources reported that 'African Congress' activities had revived in place of Raditladi's B.P. Federal Party. It was
said that K.T. Motsete was trying to set up a B.P. branch of the South African A.N.C., while Walter Mosweu and Dikobe Ontumetse were trying to set up a branch of its rival offshoot the P.A.C. (which had been founded only the year before). Meanwhile Gaolese Koma's brother in Czechoslovakia, Kenneth Koma, seemed to be sending communist literature to all and sundry. Intelligence sources reported that the air was full of 'the philosophy of extreme African Nationalism' as propagated by Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Tom Mboya and Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, and Dr Banda in Nyasaland. Radio Moscow blared at night from shortwave sets in the townships along the line of rail. Francistown was particularly ripe for the growth of 'agitation', as it was a meeting point for migrant workers going to Johannesburg from as far north as Tanganyika. The town itself was going through temporary economic recession but was bursting at the seams with peasants driven off the land by Tati Company extortion. The Tati Company was a source of continuous grievance both in Francistown and in the surrounding white farmland. Police intelligence concluded that there was as yet no effective nationalist movement in Bechuanaland, but: 'The material for such a group is available at present; a leader is required.'

Seretse was preoccupied with his health in 1960, but was not insensitive to the 'Year of Africa'. One of the South African refugees in Bechuanaland was an old friend from Fort Hare, Oliver Tambo - who had been sent abroad to organize the A.N.C. in exile. Tambo and Ronald Segal, representing the African wing and the European or White wing of the Congress Alliance, crossed the border at Lobatse. Tambo recalled that Seretse 'arranged for me to get a house' in Serowe, where Tambo and Segal waited to be joined by Yusuf Dadoo of the Indian or Asian wing of the Congress movement. Seretse, however, had little chance to be hospitable, as he was ill and away for much of the time Tambo was in Serowe, and Tambo socialized with Lenyeletse instead. The colonial authorities noted that Tambo availed himself of Seretse's post-office box as his mailing address. Seretse for his part was gratified that there was no question of the British colonial authorities considering the 'repatriation' of Tambo to South Africa. (On the contrary the D.C. in Serowe, young David Robinson, was positively sympathetic to African liberation in South Africa.) Timbo, Segal and Dadoo flew north from Palapye airfield on April 15th, 1960.

Some excitement was caused in the Khama family and in official B.P. circles by a series of articles about Ruth Khama appearing in the British magazine John Bull, written by the English political journalist John Hatch. Ruth condemned the articles as impertinent, and the Secretariat at Mafikeng thought them 'cheap'. Seretse went to Bulawayo for a second medical check-up on March 30th, 1960. After numerous X-rays there, he returned home on April 2nd. Dr Shee at Bulawayo had found a blockage in the second part of the duodenum, and advised surgery in Britain. Robinson, the Serowe district commissioner, noted that his sickness prevented Seretse from attending to official duties. Unbeknown to Seretse, Dr Squires, the B.P. chief medical officer, speculated that the disorder
must be associated with the familial Khama tendency to kidney trouble, and gave Seretse a life expectancy of two years.

Arrangements were made for the operation in London - though not at the London Clinic, as Tshekedi had died there. The Times newspaper in London was primed with a story that Seretse was coming for a rest, and Seretse left with Ruth by train for Salisbury after a farewell kgotla meeting in Serowe on May 4th, 1960. After catching B.O.A.C.'s flight BA 116 from Salisbury, Seretse was admitted as a private patient to Barts (St Bartholomew's) hospital near St Paul's Cathedral. The Commonwealth Relations Office agreed to cover the costs (chargeable against B.P. funds) as a gesture to an important political figure - whom 'we can confidently expect' to 'play a leading part' in the Legislative Council which would probably be formed in the next year. A strange form of political appreciation, remarked the Treasury. Elsewhere the C.R.O. admitted that it had paid because Seretse was a special case due to his being so widely known among British parliamentarians.

An ulcer was removed from Seretse's duodenum on June 21st, by which time Seretse had already thanked the C.R.O. for financing his treatment. Seretse and Ruth did not fly out of London until July 21st. The reason for the prolonged periods of observation and recovery became apparent when Seretse was diagnosed as suffering from an inflamed pancreas and probable diabetes. The diagnosis of diabetes was confirmed over the next year or two. Meanwhile he was treated for pancreatitis.

Seretse's diabetes was never to be a widely known fact in Botswana, except among close friends and colleagues - right up to his death from diabetes-related complications 20 years later. He had to assume, like all diabetics, the strict regimen of being his own doctor for the rest of his life. Ruth, who had had some training in dietetics many years previously, shared this role. It became their joint responsibility to maintain Seretse's blood sugar at the right level through diet, and to take insulin by intravenous injection when necessary.

It was a hard regimen, and one not always strictly adhered to, for a man who liked fatty red meat and cold thirst-quenching beers in the hot season. The temptation to eat and drink was also strongest when periodic depressions of spirit - to which diabetes gives rise - set in.

Seretse arrived back in Serowe on July 23rd, 1960 - in a sense a new man. He was slimmer, fitter, and more aware of his mortality, but still convalescent and ordered not to travel about for a month. He found that things had gone remarkably well in local 'tribal' affairs in his absence, while no alternative dominating personality to Seretse had emerged. The general purposes committee of the Tribal Council had not been very effective without Seretse's leadership, but the full council had had a full and lively fifth session in June.

Of particular note was the passion of debate on Lenyeletse's motion on 'Colour discrimination in the B.P.' It was a live issue for two reasons: firstly because of the grievances of African civil servants and of teachers about their scales of pay and conditions of service, all inferior to those of equivalent European officers, and secondly because of the discrimination suffered by Africans in public places such
as hotels, shops and post offices where they were served - if at all - out of side hatches. 11
The 'Year of Africa' meant that Serowe became a stop on the map for some touring dignitaries. The U.S. ambassador from Pretoria called on Tuesday, August 16th. He was followed on Friday, August 26th by Sir John Maud, the new High Commissioner, on a belated familiarization visit. He had toured the 'white' townships of the Protectorate more than a year earlier.

Seretse addressed Maud as spokesman of the Tribal Council general purposes committee, raising the questions of drought relief and of 'colour discrimination'. On the latter, Seretse was quite candid in giving a warning that 'moderate leaders of African opinion would find it difficult to convince their fellows if sources of racial friction were not removed.' 32
It was during Sir John Maud's visit, in the Serowe kgotla, that Seretse first met Quett Masire. Masire was working as a photo-journalist for the Naledi ya Batswana newspaper. The two men established a rapport after Masire took Seretse's picture in the kgotla and then cheekily walked up to him to ask his permission. Seretse enjoyed this display of audacity.3
Quett Masire had been a young head-teacher at Kanye, in the Bangwaketse Reserve of south-eastern Bechuanaland, who had resigned to go into fulltime farming and small business. Both as a teacher and as a farmer he had clashed frequently with his kgosi, Bathoen II, who resisted attempts by his subjects to rival him in any accumulation of wealth. In 1956 Masire began working as the southern Bechuanaland stringer for the Bantu Press of Johannesburg, which published a number of newspapers, notably the Bantu World, which was the main newspaper read by black South Africans. In 1959 the Bantu Press had revived Naledi ya Batswana, one of its 'African Echo' newspapers covering the country from the Cape to the Zambezi, aimed at Bechuanaland readers. The colonial administration gave the newspaper financial assistance on condition that it toned down the 'Africanism' of its editor, Kgosi Lebotse, and played up B.P. government activities. Masire became Naledi's chief reporter. 14

Though people elsewhere in the Bechuanaland Protectorate continued to bet on Seretse Khama as the inevitable leader of a future 'black state' there was a rapid falling away of support for him in his own part of the country. Security sources reported that they were sure 'that criticism of Seretse outside tribal affairs will probably increase rather than diminish.'
Seretse himself was undoubtedly feeling marginalized. This comes through in his contribution to debate in the Joint Advisory Council of October 17th-18th, 1960. Government was proposing to set up a Central Kalahari Game Reserve, with the dual and contradictory purpose of wildlife preservation and some kind of reserve for Basarwa or 'Bushmen' people. The humanitarian aspects of the proposal were taken up by Dr S.M. Molema, while the European members of the council concerned themselves with the interests of ranching in exterminating wildlife which threatened their cattle. Then it was the turn of the African members of council to speak. Raditladi led them in a sanctimonious chorus of praise for the wonders of 'beautiful things in nature which express the importance of the
Creator.' Bathoen weighed in with, 'I like game so much that I have put down my rifle for the last five years.' This proved to be too much for Seretse, ever sensitive about hypocrisy in general and about his censorious 'uncle' Bathoen in particular. He was also aware of the current debate at Mahalapye, where Raditladi was subchief, between aristocrats and 'new men' over the drilling of bore-holes in hunting lands, which would allow the extension of cattle-posts into the Kalahari and the rise of medium-sized cattle-owners. Seretse's new friendship with Masire may have reinforced his suspicion of Bathoen's motives in opposing the opening up of opportunities for accumulative commoners. Though Seretse had not yet thrown in his lot with any nationalist movement, he was the only person in the J.A.C. to express anything like the views of the commoners calling for democracy. In typical languid fashion Seretse used humour to ridicule his aristocratic opponents who wanted to allow 'these at one time dreadful animals to roam around the whole of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, regardless of the harm they may do to our economy.' To Seretse the real choice was stark: either 'breed wildebeest and various other objectionable animals like that, or breed cattle.' He mocked those people 'very much attached to game - who have a soul, who appreciate beauty and love to see springbok jumping all over the veld, even if they jump into a herd of prime cattle, infecting them with foot and mouth disease.' He called for the reduction in areas outside game reserves of 'certain species of game [which] do transmit or help to transmit foot and mouth disease.' But he had no wish to identify himself with the views of Russell England, the white settler leader in the J.A.C., who 'is for the destruction of everything that has four legs, except the cow.'16

It was Seretse's personal and financial interest in cattle which first led him into the confidence of Fawcus and the colonial authorities. There had been a long rumble of discontent, from northern B.P. cattle producers and traders, about the inefficiencies of the Lobatse abattoir run by the Colonial/Commonwealth Development Corporation (C.D.C.). Tshekedi Khama had joined forces with the Glazer Brothers, the Johannesburg-based owners of the Tati Company, in October 1958, to press for a new abattoir at Francistown. But the B.P. administration had instead switched the Lobatse management contract from the C.D.C. to the South African entrepreneur, Cyril Hurvitz, for two years. The Glazer Brothers were regarded as speculators short on liquid capital and out for a quick buck, and too tied to the 'unsavoury' (because dominated by the Afrikaner Broederbond) Volkskas Bank *political financial group* in South Africa.

Fawcus planned instead to half-nationalize the Lobatse abattoir with a ten year licence given to the C.D.C. in conjunction with the government-sponsored Livestock Producers Trust, and to reward Hurvitz with a cannery contract called ECCO (Export & Canning Co.) shared with the abattoir company - with a canning plant next door to the abattoir in Lobatse. Seretse was the key to all Fawcus's plans. Already 'an influential member' of the government's Livestock Industry Advisory Board, he was recruited
to the board of the new joint abattoir company - B. P. Abattoirs Ltd. There he was won over to the plan for the ECCO cannery, taking with him the support of the Bangwato Tribal Council - who represented the producers of two thirds of all the cattle that were being exported. Also working in similar fashion on Kgosi Bathoen as the most influential African in the south of the B.P., Fawcus thereby engineered the acceptance of ECCO by the Livestock Industry Advisory Board in December 1960 - over the heads of protesting white settlers in Francistown. Seretse and Russell England were then elected to the board of directors of ECCO as the representatives of the new Lobatse abattoir company. Seretse may have lagged behind a few other cattle-owners in the country in terms of numbers owned and sold, but he had become, almost at a stroke, the most influential livestock producer in Bechuanaland. It also seems that he had, at last, gained Fawcus's confidence as a man to be reckoned with.

It was Motsamai Mpho who at last galvanized the various elements long talked of as the 'B.P. African Congress' into the actual formation of a political party in late 1960. Mpho had been expelled from South Africa and repatriated to Bechuanaland in July 1960 after his acquittal as 'Accused No.48' in the long-running A.N.C. Treason Trial. He then attempted to join L.D. Raditladi's B.P. Federal Party but found it dormant: Raditladi even refused to give him a copy of its constitution! Rather than return to his remote rural home in Ngamiland, Mpho chose to base himself among the main 'Congress' activists at Palapye. From this central position he could reach out to other nationalists along the line-of-rail, north towards Francistown and south towards Lobatse, as well as west to nearby Serowe.'I

The new party, known as the Bechuanaland People's Party (B.P.P.), was formally established on December 6th, 1960, in response to the announcement of an elections schedule for the new Legislative Council (Legco). Mpho had recruited K.T. Motsete as president of the party, widely respected as an intellectual high-brow but an ineffective political organizer in previous attempts to set up political parties. Other sympathizers in the Bangwato Reserve attracted by Mpho included the veteran organizer Archie Tseobebe, the young councillor and Moeng College bursar Mout Nwako, and the Palapye trade union 'agitators' such as Klaas Motshidisi who had given so much concern to colonial intelligence committees. Seretse's cousin and confidant Lenyeletse was approached, and Seretse himself was not completely unsympathetic to the B.P.P. at first - phoning Mpho in Palapye to ask what was going on, and being chided in return to keep himself above politics. Other B. P.P. sympathizers, such as Richard Mannotshoko in Mahalapye, were precluded from declaring any allegiance by their obligations as government civil servants.

The biggest component of the new People's Party, not won without difficulty, was the considerable following which Phillip Matante had recruited in Francistown. Matante arrived in Palapye off the Francistown train one Sunday morning in February 1961, and Mpho recruited him as the B.P.P.'s vice-president. 'I
With its only centre of mass activity in Francistown near the Rhodesian border, the new B. P. P. took on many of the characteristics of the new mass parties in the Central African Federation. The triumvirate of Motsete, Mpho and Matante took a strong stand against traditionalism - as 'a narrow, exclusive, totalitarian outlook, communal chauvinism, stagnating conservatism, nepotism, patronage, belief in a mythical hereditary divine right of precedence, etc.' They also protested strongly against the restrictive terms of the new constitutional dispensation. Under the principle known as 'communal representation, only non-blacks would be elected directly to the new Legco. So far as there were to be black elections, these would vary from district to district through local 'tribal' councils to the African Council - which would act as an electoral college to supply an equal number of black to non-black members of the Legco. The British, fearing the political militancy of migrant workers abroad, followed a Basutoland precedent and ensured that no Batswana temporarily in South Africa or Southern Rhodesia would have a vote. A protesting B.P.P. delegation, which included Mout Nwako, was received by Resident Commissioner Fawcus in early January 1961. Fawcus failed to persuade them that 'communal representation' should be provisionally adopted as a first stage towards greater democracy.

The B.P.P. burst into public consciousness in February 1961 with a series of verbal attacks on the impending Legislative Council, on racial discrimination and on the power of the chiefs. Radical demands were fired by news of unrest in South Africa. By March 1961 the B.P.P. had received the Pan-African seal of approval from the secretariat of Nkrumah's All African People's Congress secretariat in Ghana, with a gift of three Landrover vehicles. The party leadership could now move up and down the line of rail and in and out of district capitals. The B.P.P. developed its own youth and women's wings, holding spirited public meetings on patches of ground that became known, South African style, as 'freedom squares'. It spread south and found a ready audience amongst meat workers, junior clerks and new town dwellers in the rapidly expanding railway town of Lobatse. Daring words and challenges to colonial authority earned the B.P.P. a popular reputation for bravery, and gave an aura of excitement to their meetings.20

Colonial administrators watched the growth of the B.P.P. with concern. It seemed to them too much inspired, if not directly connected with, developments in the A.N.C. and P.A.C. of South Africa. Traditional leaders were left aghast at this new voice of the people in Bechuanaland. Nothing like this had been experienced before in the political life of the Protectorate. Legco as the cosy next stage of constitutional development already looked out of date before it had even met. Suddenly a new force articulating a radical set of demands had come to the fore, quite outside the formal political processes so neatly developed by the colonial authorities as a working compromise between white settlers, traditionalists and 'tribal progressives'.

The B.P.P. led a boycott of the elections for the African Council in every district except the Bangwato Reserve in April 1961. The only one of the B.P.P.
triumvirate to stand for election was Motsete, in the Bangwato Reserve, and he was roundly defeated. Tsoebebe and Nwako also stood as Bangwato representatives and were elected, but they had already been alienated from the People's Party by its naive opposition to 'traditionalism'. While the elections were conducted with propriety by the reformed 'tribal' government in Serowe, this was not always the case elsewhere. In Maun in the northwest the elections were manipulated by ruling Batawana traditionalists to make sure that 'Bayei malcontents' were not elected - Mpho being seen as one of them.2

Thirty-two men but no women were elected from 13 electoral divisions to the African Council, where they were joined by the eight 'African Authorities' (i.e. paramount chiefs) led by Kgosi Bathoen II of the Bangwaketse, and by seven white officials. Wise people in the kgotlas were quite sensible to the need to elect well-educated 'modernizers' with good traditional connections, to represent them most effectively in the African Council. Even in Maun people elected a former 'angry young man' from among the aristocrats, the vociferous Tsheko Tsheko. The same pattern followed when the African Council met and got round to nominating some of its members for the Legco: those chosen included L.D. Raditladi, Goareng Mosinyi, Archie Tsoebebe, Quett Masire and Seretse Khama.

The white settlers of Bechuanaland were disturbed - though some may have been reassured - by news from South Africa. In March 1961 the South African government announced its withdrawal from the Commonwealth on South Africa's becoming a republic on May 31st. This would force whites to choose between remaining British nationals and becoming South African republican citizens, making the latter foreigners in Bechuanaland. There were too few whites - a mere 3 000 scattered in small blocks of alienated land around Lobatse, Francistown, Ghanzi and in the Tuli (Limpopo) Block, or trading in the 'tribal' capitals - to form a political party of their own in Bechuanaland. The settlers were also divided between those, mostly farmers and Afrikaans-speaking, who considered themselves South Africans, and those, mostly traders and English-speaking, who identified themselves as British Bechuanalanders. The leader of the latter was Russell England, a (Polish-born?) agriculturalist turned settler farmer and businessman who had been in Bechuanaland for over four decades.

At some time before the Legco met in June 1961, Russell England approached Seretse Khama with the proposition of founding a 'multi-racial' party along the lines of the United Federal Party in the Central African Federation. The proposed party is usually referred to as the B.P. Liberal Party. (It is sometimes confused in history books with, but was entirely separate from, Raditladi's B.P. Federal Party.) Seretse declined England's proposal.22 The occasion when England approached Seretse may have been a meeting of the various livestock boards in Lobatse, Francistown, Ghanzi and in the Tuli (Limpopo) Block, or trading in the 'tribal' capitals - to form a political party of their own in Bechuanaland. The settlers were also divided between those, mostly farmers and Afrikaans-speaking, who considered themselves South Africans, and those, mostly traders and English-speaking, who
winning Swiss bull, and a 'magnificent black ox' owned by Seretse 'jumped scrupulously over a white line on the ground.'

The Legislative Council was formally inaugurated by High Commissioner Maud in front of the new High Court building in Lobatse and a crowd of 3,000 on Tuesday, June 20th, 1961. Chiefs and officials from Basutoland and Swaziland, including Paramount Chief Moshoeshoe I, were in attendance. Film cameras recorded the ceremonial in the chamber for television - presumably British or Rhodesian, since there was no television in South Africa - and, not surprisingly, dwelt on the figures of Chiefs Kgari Sechele and Bathoen I dressed in all the splendour of Britain's royal household cavalry complete with polished breastplates.

The real business of Legco was delayed until the next session in September, but delegates met and socialized. Quett Masire was struck by the contrast between the aristocratic disdain of his own kgosi, Bathoen II, and the open and friendly approach of Seretse. This was also the first opportunity for those Africans in Legco who had not been in the previous Joint Advisory Council to get to know the European members. The latter were led by the ageing Russell England and the rather younger Jimmy Haskins, a leading Francistown businessman who had been born and brought up in the country. Both saw the need for Bechuanaland to follow a "multi-racial" path of constitutional development. To their left there was Thomas Shaw, a Palapye trader and encourager of so many 'B.P. African Congress' members, and to their right there was an Afrikaner nationalist diehard - Hendrik van Gass from the Tuli Block. One rather quiet representative of the Asian or Muslim community, A.R. Chand, also sat among the whites.

During August 1961 Seretse was visited by a top U.S. envoy, George Mennen "Soapy" Williams, who stayed overnight in Serowe with his wife and an entourage of officials after arriving by air from the north in a Dakota DC-3. Williams was the first U.S. Assistant Secretary of State appointed for African Affairs, and was touring the continent on behalf of newly elected President Jack Kennedy. A wealthy patrician with an expansive character, well-known for his green and white polka dot bow-ties, he was the inheritor of a soapsud fortune and a former Democratic governor of Michigan with a passionate interest in civil rights.

The reason for Williams's visit was ostensibly to inspect developments in local government associated with the Bangwato Tribal Council. Formerly secret U.S. documents reveal that 'Soapy' Williams was less than impressed with Bechuanaland's chances of becoming a model inter-racial society, thinking Swaziland or Basutoland to be more promising. But he was quite taken with Seretse, as he cabled the State Department from his stop at Tananarive in Madagascar on August 21st:

"Few Bechuanaland Africans progressive or modern minded, but Seretse KHAMA, intelligent and British-educated paramount chief [sic] an exception. We met him and his English wife at Serowe and were impressed [by] his ability and her constructive interest."
Williams was concerned about South African communists such as Joe Matthews (the son of Z.K.) using Bechuanaland as a base, and about the fact that 20 students from the B.P. were studying in communist countries. But otherwise there was little to worry U.S. interests:

The British have moved slowly in Bechuanaland. They actually aren't quite sure what to do with the territory ... Of all the places I visited on my recent trip I felt the least urgency in Bechuanaland. Its slow but steady progress from tribalism to a legislative council type government seems satisfactory to all concerned and we should do nothing to disturb it. Apart from Peace Corps no particular action here ...

Fawcus recalls that he took 'Soapy' Williams along to meet Seretse at Serowe, and that Seretse declined to be drawn by Williams's probings about his future political role. Seretse was much happier talking about cattle than about any personal plans. Williams noted that the 'able' Fawcus had developed 'a good working relationship with Seretse Khama.'29 His description of Seretse as 'the chief nationalist leader' was premature, but Fawcus believes that it was 'Soapy' Williams's proddings on the afternoon of August 15th, 1961, that made up Seretse's mind to become just such a nationalist leader.30

Seretse had a number of options for the future. He could, as the British tacitly acknowledged, claim the Bangwato bogosi that he had lost in 1948-50, now that Tshekedi was gone. Alternately he could go for a national rather than a 'tribal' future. His inclinations were to the former, but Seretse had at first seen no pressing need to put himself forward as a national leader. Masire confirms that Seretse would have been happy to identify himself with another national leader if a viable one reflecting his point of view had come forward.

Legco met for business on September 27th, with the African Council meeting at the same time as a large caucus in which issues could be aired before passing them on to the more restricted African membership of Legco. The B.P. government was faced with an exclusively male but 'multi-racial' Legco membership that could be characterized as moderately reformist. Fawcus announced plans for the move, after 66 years of indecision, of the Bechuanaland administrative headquarters from Mafikeng in South Africa to a new capital inside the country - an essential prerequisite for the assertion of the country's sovereignty. This, as we shall see, appears to have been stealing a march on the British government, but Seretse made his mark in a Legco debate welcoming the announcement at the end of September 1961.

Meanwhile there had been a series of debates in Serowe, since August 1961, about the desirability of political parties in the kgotla. An application by the Bechuanaland People's Party to hold meetings in the Bangwato Reserve was discussed in kgotla during the first few days of October. Traditionalists like Peto Sekgoma, Dingalo Nthebolang and Oteng Mphoeng were opposed to the very principle of party politics intruding in 'tribal life'. Seretse on the other hand, while agreeing that the B.P.P. was spreading confusion and dissension among the Bangwato, argued before the kgotla that 'the only way
to fight the party was ... to form ourselves into a body which would expose the falsehoods put out by the People's Party
'The people should unite said Seretse, 'and form an organisation with proper leaders who would be able not only to stop the damage being caused by the People's Party but which would be able to advise Government what should be done to further the interests of the Territory.'
'He was obviously referring' said the Government Secretary who arrived in Serowe two or three days after this meeting in kgotla, 'to starting a new political party.'
During the early November 1961 session of Legco, Seretse called together a caucus of its African members to consider the idea of forming a National Democratic Party. It was an idea whose time had come. Bechuanaland was now apparently on the way to national identity and self-government. It needed a political party to guide it down the pathways of parliamentary democracy, and the People's Party had failed to fill that role. Archie Tsoebebe claims that, as a former but now disillusioned member of the B.P.P., he was pressing

on Seretse the need for a new party to rival the B.P.P. It also seems that Seretse had already informally canvassed the idea with Fawcus, who had stressed the need for such a party to represent the whole country and not just the north. Fawcus sang the virtues of Quett Masire from the south who had gained the confidence of progressive administrators because of his role on Naledi ya Batswana - as a vital component for such a party, to make it truly national. Seretse argued that the future stability, independence and prosperity of Bechuanaland could not be guaranteed by the empty and hot-headed rhetoric of the People's Party - promising everything and yielding nothing. In order to break out of the cycle of poverty and neglect, and to survive in the difficult circumstances of southern Africa, Bechuanaland needed thoughtful and pragmatic solutions to its many problems.

Two of the ten African members of Legco, Kgosi Bathoen and Kgosi Mokgosi, immediately dissociated themselves from the idea of a political party - on the principle that they were above party politics in a position analogous to civil servants. The other African members of Legco, educated men and cattle-owners who aspired to greater heights, proved to be enthusiastic, none more so than Quett Masire. Masire, as the experienced journalist, agreed to take on with Seretse the task of preparing a party constitution over the next couple of months. Seretse was of course also a trained lawyer who, besides his extraordinary familiarity with the workings of the Westminster parliament, had been a member of the constitutional committee of the Joint Advisory Council.

November 1961 brought news of the British government's recognition of the inevitability of constitutional progress in the High Commission Territories, now that their future was definitely distinct from that of a republican South Africa. Prime Minister Macmillan himself made the announcement in parliament, and it was welcomed by Opposition leader Hugh Gaitskell. The announcement was given symbolic force by the removal of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland from the aegis of the Commonwealth Relations Office to the Colonial Office in
London, which was by now becoming well practised in the processes of
decolonization. But the three territories remained for the time being under a
common High Commissioner who was also Britain's ambassador to South Africa,
resident in Pretoria.
But it was by no means clear what direction the constitutional development of
Bechuanaland would take. There was great disappointment when, at the same
time as the other advances in November 1962, the British government turned
down Fawcus's plans to transfer the administrative headquarters from South
Africa into the Protectorate - placing economy above political
consideration. The only obvious change for the better in Bechuanaland in late
1961 was the sudden increase in the number of Africans invited to government
social functions such as garden parties.
No doubt cautiously encouraged by these developments, Seretse and Masire put
together a draft party constitution and presented it to the steering committee of the
nascent Democratic Party, which met in Tsoebebe's home base in Mahalapye in or
around December 1961. The steering committee accepted the Seretse-Masire
drafts and decided it was time for the party to go public. Mochudi was chosen as a
suitable meeting place for the party's inaugural conference, and February 28th,
1962, was the chosen date. Mochudi was in the south-east, not in 'Khama's
country'. Seretse and the others wanted the Democratic Party to be a national
party, with no hint of 'tribal' partiality, from the start.
Word of Seretse's plotting with Masire and the rest got to Motsamai Mpho of the
People's Party. Mpho telephoned Seretse in Serowe from Palapye and suggested
that Seretse, as a kgosi, had no business taking a role in party politics. He hinted
that if Seretse kept his plate clean he might even become titular state president
above a B.P.P. prime minister. Mpho recalls that Seretse turned the idea down flat
as a confidence trick, saying, 'What you want is to grab the people for yourself.'
There is no doubt that the entry of Seretse into the arena of party politics
disconcerted the more radical nationalist politicians of the B.P.P. Mpho was
always to complain of Seretse's unfair advantage in recruiting mass allegiance,
and the opportunities he had for manipulating his inherited status for political
ends.
It was no doubt Mpho who passed the news to the South African radical
newspaper, New Age, in December 1961. The article claimed that 'chiefs and
whites in the Territory' were so disconcerted by the strength of the B.P.P. that
'behind the scenes talks are going on at present for the formation of their own
party.' Rather more accurately, the newspaper reported that the new party's
proposed constitution was demanding:
One man, one vote and an African majority in Legco by the time of the next
elections in 1965, as well as the achievement of an economically viable and fully
independent state in which there must
be no discrimination on the basis of race, colour and creed.33
Seretse Khama's party was not a party of 'chiefs and whites' and was never to
become one. Though there were a few white members and a significant number of
members related to chiefs, most whites and most chiefs were hostile to the new
party. The lack of sympathy for the Democratic Party from traditionalist leaders was to be demonstrated in preparations for the new party's very first public meeting.

The steering committee of the Bechuanaland Democratic Party (B.D.P.) approached the regent of the Bakgatla, Kgosi Mmusi Pilane, for permission to hold the inaugural meeting in Mochudi on February 28th, 1962. Mmusi was hesitant, but eventually gave permission. Meantime he came under pressure from 'neighbouring chiefs’ - Masire implies that it was his own kgosi, Bathoen II. They suggested that Mochudi had been chosen because Mmusi was a mere regent; the bunch of northerners and ne'er-do-wells in the Democratic Party would never have dared ask a really substantive kgosi in the south to host their meeting. 4 When the would-be party members, Seretse among them, arrived in Mochudi, they were told that permission for the meeting had been withdrawn. They were encouraged to leave town by a few well chosen stones being shied at them. A telephone call was then put through to the District Commissioner in nearby Gaborone - an area of government and freehold land not under the authority of a kgosi. Permission was granted to hold the meeting there. As a result the inaugural meeting of the Bechuanaland Democratic Party was held under the big morula tree on the eastern side of Gaborone station - the same place where Seretse had been greeted by his followers in 1950. (Today the tree is squeezed between the De Beers diamond-sorting building and the American and Libyan embassies.) Seretse Khama was the obvious choice for president of the new party. Archie Tsoebebe took the post of vice-president. The elected treasurer was Benjamin Steinberg, a white trader and cattle-rancher from the Bangwato district. Quett Masire was elected as party secretary.

The road from the morula tree to political power was not as short and straight as the few hundred metres from the tree to today's parliament and government offices suggest. At its inception the B.D.P. had the crucial advantage of being founded by people already sitting in the national legislature, but it lagged in popular support way behind the B.P.P. The latter had had a head start of 12 months and was organized on the currently successful Pan-African model as a mass-based party, with a strong anticolonialist stance appealing to urban semi-proletarians and discontented youth.

The B.P.P. thus had access, which was denied the B.D.P., to Pan-African solidarity funds - mostly from Ghana but also partly from communist countries. The B.D.P., on the other hand, began and continued for some years operating on a shoe string, relying on the financial resources of its main members - who may have been middle class but were not, at this time, affluent. The printing of membership cards, for example, was funded by an individual party member, which may help to explain why some adherents did not have party membership cards even in the late 1960s.

The B.D.P. aimed its initial recruitment at key educated and propertied figures in rural communities, such as primary school headteachers and small
general traders - in the expectation that they would lead the rural mass electorate by example. Tsoebebe took on the task of recruitment in the northern half of the country, while Masire took on the southern half. The main method of recruitment was the mail: travel was difficult and expensive in such a vast country with poor roads. Tsoebebe, as the founder of both the teachers' and civil servants' national associations, had a better network of contacts to pursue than Masire. But Masire, half Tsoebebe's age, had considerably more energy to expend on travel and in sounding out potential new members.

A statement of the Democratic Party's principles, entitled Maitlomo le Maikaelelo ('intents and purposes') was drawn up by Masire and distributed to members and potential members. The B.D.P. committed itself to the attainment of an economically viable and fully independent state, through cooperation rather than conflict with the colonial authorities. The timetable for advance was realistically linked to the next Legco elections in 1965, when the franchise should be extended to the African majority. From that point the party planned to work 'to attain full internal self-government based on a proper ministerial system by the following elections.' That implied that political independence would have been achieved sometime around 1970. Meanwhile the radicals of the B.P.P. were calling for 'independence now' - or rather next year - in 1963.

The B.D.P. had the confidence of progressive members of the colonial administration from the start. But Fawcus was insistent that it would be improper for the B.D.P. to act as a political party in Legco proceedings, as it was formed after the initiation of the Council and its members had not been elected as representatives of a political party. Seretse and the rest meekly complied, and the B.D.P. did not form a caucus within the Legco during the lifetime of that assembly.

Phillip Matante led the B.P.P. attack on its new rival and on Seretse as its leader, highlighting his association with the colonialists and with whites in general. Campaigning at Mapoka in the Tati district, near the border with Southern Rhodesia and the now discredited Central African Federation, on February 25th, 1962, Matante said: 'The B.P.P. is leading the Bechuanaland Protectorate out of darkness and into freedom. I have no evidence that Seretse Khama will do anything to [further] this aim, but much to the contrary. He is a European, eating with them, schooling his children with them. He is selling the Bechuanaland Protectorate to Rhodesia. They are trying to Federate the Bechuanaland Protectorate with Rhodesia.' 35

Seretse was sufficiently stung to reply in a speech in Serowe on March 18th, 1962. He countered that he had been 'at the cattle-post' during the later 1950s when the Protectorate was being encouraged to look north to the Federation as a counter-balance to South Africa.(The accusation would have been more apposite against Tshekedi.)

The police security report on this meeting in Serowe records that some of the crowd did raise doubts about Seretse's role in party politics. What could Seretse achieve in a party which he could not achieve as kgosi of the Bangwato? 36
Seretse and his party exploited the ambiguity of his situation: ordinary people always found it difficult to distinguish Seretse's role in nationalist politics from his hereditary status as a kgosi. B.P.P. members began to mock the Democratic Party as 'Donkrag', an Afrikaans word which approximated to the tortured pronunciation of the word 'democratic' by ordinary people. It was the Afrikaans for a car jack - a literal translation being false or 'dumb' strength. But the B.D.P. paid its opponents the backhanded compliment of accepting the symbolic value of the name 'Domkrag' and of its uplifting meaning, adopting a heavy vehicle jack as its party symbol and the cry of Tsholetsa! ('lift up!') as the party slogan.

While Seretse's B.D.P. slowly built up its membership, the B.P.P. began to falter and then to tear itself apart because of internal dissension between its leaders. In early June 1962 the uneasy triumvirate of Motsete, Matante and Mpho crossed swords over the location of party headquarters - Mpho's Palapye against Matante's Francistown. By the end of the month, Motsete and Matante had publicly dismissed Mpho from the party, accusing him of communism - the code word for Mpho's (A. N. C.) socialist rather than their (P.A.C.) Africanist inclinations. Mpho struck back by accusing Matante of mismanagement of party funds, but Matante had moved first and had the upper hand as the bulk of party support was in Francistown.

Mpho, together with his loyal supporters, refused to accept the expulsion from the B.P.P., and thereafter ran the Palapye branch independently constituting what became known as 'B.P.P.-2' or as B.P.P.(Mpho), contrasted with 'B.P.P.-1' effectively run by Matante but with Motsete as a mere cypher at its head. Matante's row with Mpho greatly reduced the momentum of the B.P.P. as a national movement, as the purge was widely condemned. Such selfinflicted wounds were enormous comfort to the B.D.P. How could the B.P.P. hope to govern a united Bechuanaland, when they could not even agree amongst themselves? But both Matante and Mpho were good at articulating the grievances felt by ordinary people, particularly younger workers seeking urban employment and in junior branches of government service. Such people were acutely aware of the limits on education, of the poor pay and job prospects, and of the all too obvious racial discrimination in the towns which held them back in life.

The stop-go-stop nature of late colonial British policy towards Bechuanaland was illustrated by the fact that the refusal to countenance the removal of the capital from Mafikeng, announced in November 1961, was reversed in March 1962 - after furious lobbying of the Colonial Office by Fawcus. The High Commissioner in Pretoria and the Resident Commissioner in Mafikeng came increasingly in conflict as Bechuanaland advanced into selfgovernment. Sir John Maud, a town-planning academic by profession, was a high-profile proconsul determined to promote 'multi-racial' ideas in a reluctant South Africa, while also pandering to Afrikaans cultural pride. Maud prided himself on speaking Afrikaans. He had also received a lot of newspaper coverage for helping to push a black man's car out of a flooded ford. However, in regard to the High
Commission Territories, he was no different from previous high commissioners in regarding them almost as personal fiefs. They were to be toured periodically in splendid uniform and ostrich-feather hat, to receive tribute as 'Your Excellency' or as 'Tau Tona ('the great lion').

When he was appointed in 1959, the Commonwealth Relations Office had expected Maud to progressively abandon control of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland to their respective Resident Commissioners. But he chose instead to take his super-gubernatorial responsibilities seriously, disconcerting the C.R.O. by presenting his own ideas for their respective development. 37

Peter Fawcus, as Resident Commissioner in Mafikeng, fretted to be given full gubernatorial powers over his territory. Maud, in Pretoria, appeared to him to be overfond of the ostrich feathers and other out-dated privileges. The High Commissioner's Office in Pretoria was a hindrance to good communications between Mafikeng and Whitehall. It was not to be until August 1st, 1964 - after Maud's departure - that the Colonial Office abolished the responsibilities of the High Commissioner's Office for Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland. It is not known when and how Fawcus made a clean breast of security issues to Seretse. But there was one aspect of national security of which Seretse and his friends must have been at least vaguely aware. The South African security services certainly assumed that Seretse was part of the set-up. Though full details still remain secret, this is what has been referred to as 'the refugee pipeline'. The 'pipeline' was under the personal finance and control of Peter Fawcus, ultimately responsible to Britain's SIS (Special Intelligence Service) or MI6. The main function of the 'pipeline' was to fly politically sensitive refugees from Bechuanaland to newly independent Tanganyika. The need for such an arrangement was made clear by the dangerous delays, inviting South African intervention, in the passage of Tambo and Segal through Bechuanaland in March-April 1960.

What made the 'pipeline' so sensitive was that it secretly brought activists such as Tambo and Mandela southwards, as well as taking them northwards. The pilot employed by the 'pipeline' was an eccentric and extremely hefty Belgian-German pilot named Captain H. Bartaune. He flew his own Piper Beechmaster aircraft between Lobatse (or Kanye or Palapye) and Kasane in Bechuanaland, and thence north via Lusaka to Dar es Salaam. Inspector John Sheppard of the police in Lobatse was in executive charge of the southern end of the 'pipeline'. Brian Egner, the District Commissioner in Kasane, and to a lesser extent Philip Steenkamp who became District Commissioner at Francistown, were also in the know.

In Kasane, Egner shone his truck's headlights at the airfield to guide Bartaune's plane in at dusk. Egner had to go to elaborate lengths to divert the attention of his local police chief. The B.P.'s police Special Branch was known to be compromised by close links with its South African equivalent. The S.A. Police were actually using a former B.P. policeman as their liaison officer with the B.P. police headquarters at Mafikeng.38
The *pipeline' was compromised in August-September 1962 by the arrest in
South Africa of its prize passenger, Nelson Mandela. He had crossed the
Bechuanaland border only days before. The officer commanding the B.P. Special
Branch was invited to visit the S.A.P. Security Branch in Mafikeng on
Wednesday, August 15th, 1962. He went with Inspector Sheppard. Sergeant
Botha of the S.A.P. came to the point about Mandela, after discussion of a letter
from Motsete to the S.A.P. warning of links between Mpho's B.P.P. faction and
'communists' in South Africa:

9. He was (of course) very interested in MANDELA and kept bringing him into
the conversation; he asked whether we were able to confirm that MANDELA had
been in Serowe, according to the information he gave us, a week or two ago. I
cannot help forming the opinion that the S.A.P. are aware of the fact that
MANDELA returned to the
Republic [of South Africa] via the B.P.39

Two weeks later, on the afternoon of August 28th, Sergeant Pio of the S.A.P.
Special Branch went to visit the B.P. Special Branch. Pio 'stated that they had
definite information that Nelson MANDELA returned to the Republic via the B.P.
and requested any information we might have.' According to Pio, Mandela had
been 'flown from Dar to the B.P. about the 25th July,' then 'definitely' spending a
week in Serowe. Mandela's host in Serowe was 'possibly' Patrick van Rensburg;
the S.A.P. also ventured that Seretse Khama might have been Mandela's host.
The B.P. Special Branch knew from Pio's confusion over dates that this was
'deliberate false information to mislead us.' Mandela had 'actually landed at Kanye
on the 23rd July.' Pio asked for a joint B.P.-S.A.P. interview with

Bartaune in Lobatse, intimating that the B.P. police did not watch all Bartaune's
movements.

13. This was a very difficult "corner" and I could only get out by
throwing questions back at Sgt. Pio.40

The two-way 'pipeline' had to be rapidly dismantled. The SIS could take no
chances of its operatives being kidnapped. With no more than a day or two's
warning, Sheppard was packed off to New Zealand on a Commonwealth
Scholarship, while Egner was sent to Canada.

This tangled skein of events raises intriguing questions about the triangle of
intelligence relations between London, Pretoria and Washington in the early
1960s. Mandela's 'cover' is said to have been blown to Pretoria by an American
intelligence operative in Natal. Why would the C.I.A. (or D.I.A.) have
compromised an M16 (or M15) operation? Who was complicit with whom? All
that is certain is that the British authorities allowed the external and internal wings
of the A.N.C. to meet for one last grand conference together, to plan future
strategies, in Lobatse, in 1962.41

Chapter 9
PARTY LEADER 1962-64
Up until about 1963, outside observers were puzzled by what they saw as the uneven political performance of Seretse Khama. According to Jack Halpern, writing under the pseudonym 'James Fairbairn' in Britain's New Statesman magazine, Seretse seemed to alternate between being interested and involved and being uninterested and hesitant about his leadership role. He was, for example, notorious for popping in and out of Legco sessions and committee rooms like a yo-yo. Restlessness and perhaps lack of concern for legislative detail, and maybe his weak bladder, drove him back and forth to socialize and listen to gossip in outside corridors.

Perhaps Seretse was still feeling his way as a politician. Perhaps the fluctuations in his leadership merely reflected fluctuations in his health. Whatever the case, Seretse seems to have become more resolute, as the leader of a political party with good political prospects, around the time of the constitutional negotiations that took place in June 1963. Perhaps word of his reputation for inconsistency had got through to him. But if this was so, the conversion to greater consistency had roots up to a year earlier.

The view abroad of Seretse Khama and of the Bechuanaland Democratic Party among nationalist leaders elsewhere in Africa was far from complimentary. The People's Party had preempted the Democratic Party in all Pan-African and Non-Aligned contacts, and spread the word that Seretse Khama and his party were 'sell-outs' to colonialism. 'Zimbabwe' nationalists in Southern Rhodesia are said to have dismissed Seretse Khama as 'liberal, anti-nationalist and anti-Pan Africanist.'


Seretse's first trip abroad in his capacity as a politician was a 12-day visit to Israel in October 1962. Israel at that time was widely admired for having made its deserts bloom by means of irrigation and perspiration. The Israeli press treated Seretse as if he were a government minister for labour and constitutional affairs, but he received much less attention than recent visiting ministers from Nigeria, Cameroun and Rwanda.

Seretse used his position in Legco to establish his political image and that of his party as the effective representatives of the local intelligentsia and of aspirant cattle-owners. The underlying message was that Seretse and the B. D.P., through their access to the existing institutions of political power, could right wrongs. The two issues chosen were close to Seretse's heart - racial discrimination, and the promotion of meat processing and marketing.
Seretse's obsessions with cattle and beef, and his place on the boards of directors of the Lobatse abattoir and canning factory, have already been discussed. It may also be argued that his general understanding of economics, like that of other Batswana, was that of a cattle-owner: a basic understanding of the notions of capital, growth, investment and consumption, and risk - summed up in the modern Setswana idiom 'cattle are our bank'.

Seretse Khama was himself a 'cattle baron', but unlike most other such *barons* he argued for the passing back of beef processing and export profits to small cattle-producers, and for the provision of water points, veterinary and marketing facilities for them. This was partly an understanding of the economies of scale: the abattoir and cannery were capital-intensive projects that needed to maximise throughput and quality exports to be profitable enough to pay off costs and so to be 'nationalized' as parastatal companies. But there was also a, perhaps naive, belief in the virtues of a cattle-owning democracy on Seretse's part.

Seretse and the B.D.P. shared the assumption, common to all commentators on Bechuanaland at the time and enshrined in colonial government development planning, that virtually every adult male Motswana was a cattleowner. From this it followed that the democratic way to spread wealth to virtually every family in the country was through the intensification and spread of commercial cattle production for export. It was also generally agreed among experts that, given a dry but healthy country lacking arable and (apparently) mineral prospects, livestock exports were the only feasible basis for national economic take-off. It is easy to forget now, but Bechuanaland in the early 1960s was classified as probably the poorest country in Africa and one of the poorest countries in the world, with an average income per head of maybe $50 a year. Mineral prospects were not to become apparent until the later 1960s. The first evidence of inequities in cattle ownership was the 1967-68 agricultural census, which showed that 30 per cent of rural households owned no cattle - and 12 per cent of them owned 60 per cent of the cattle. But even that did not totally disabuse the notion of a cattle-owning democracy.

Seretse's promotion of cattle and beef interests was generally low-key, and a matter of constant small contributions rather than dramatic interventions in debate. The question of racial discrimination, on the other hand, required such intervention.

On July 26th, 1962, in one of the longest speeches that he ever made in Legco, Seretse proposed a select committee to examine the laws and practices of racial discrimination in Bechuanaland - paying particular attention to educational segregation - and to recommend measures to end such discriminatory practices. He went on to suggest that Masire, Tsoebebe, Tšeke Tšeke and L.D. Raditladi be among those appointed to the committee. That Seretse already had the approval of Fawcus could be seen in the fact that he presented the motion 'on behalf of government'.

Racial segregation in government service had long been Tsoebebe's principal preoccupation. As African civil servants expanded in numbers and advanced up the ranks they came increasingly into contact with 'glass' walls and ceilings that
blocked equal pay and promotion. Very few Africans were employed in senior posts; most were employed in junior positions in Lobatse - while the headquarters town of Mafikeng was subject to South African apartheid outside the B.P. offices in the Imperial Reserve. Even in Lobatse there was segregation: toilet facilities, for example, were separated by grade and hence by race.

More generally, there was both overt and covert racial discrimination against Africans entering clubs, sports clubs and hotels in the B.P. There were discriminatory laws (as well as local custom enforced by chiefs) which prohibited Africans from drinking 'European' liquor, and there were separate primary schools for European and African children.

The very appointment of the Legco select committee induced Rhodesia Railways to introduce, on December 1th, 1962, a desegregated dining car on its Bulawayo-Mafikeng service - though Africans had to vacate it when the train crossed the South African border at Ramathlabama just before Mafikeng. Seretse and others on the committee celebrated the event by taking the dining car on that first day.7

The Legco select committee met nine times between November 1962 and October 1963. At its first public hearing, on Tuesday, February 19th, 1963, Mpho appeared before it claiming: 'I am the first man to begin speaking on behalf of the people of Bechuanaland. He was baited by his main B. D. P. rival from Ngamiland, Tsheko Tsheko, who hauled Mpho over the coals for accepting the utility of Legco now that it suited him, after previously boycotting elections for it. I No doubt Seretse, if he was present, was grinning all over his face at Mpho's evident discomfort.

The committee then turned to take evidence from civil servants, despite initial resistance to its quizzing of senior officials. The European members of Legco were equally sensitive about revealing the skeletons in their cupboard before the committee. Seretse seems to have soft-pedalled at this point, appreciating the fact that the Europeans were still a powerful block in the Legco and should be positively involved in the process of change. Seretse stood out against the consumer boycotts, condoned even by more radical liberals, which were used by Matante's B.P.P. to get Francistown trading stores to drop racial discrimination. He had no desire to see a white exodus from the country. He argued that whites were essential to Bechuanaland both administratively and economically, and loss of their confidence would damage the fragile administration and economy of the country. But at the same time Africans' demands for a greater share in administration and in the economy must somehow also be satisfied.

The report of the select committee was laid before the Legco in November 1963. It called for the removal of all discriminatory statutes, for a non-racial tax structure (so that richer Africans would pay income tax), and for a nonracial policy towards the financing and development of schools. It also called for the removal of all vestiges of racial discrimination in the civil service, in the provision of public services by government, and in the sale and allocation of Crown (i.e. state-owned) Lands. The recruitment and operating policies of
Rhodesia Railways, which owned and operated the line through Bechuanaland, came in for considerable comment and criticism. The committee urged that the integration of schools could be achieved by January 1st, 1964, without any unacceptable fall in educational standards.

Some European members of Legco were lukewarm about the proposals, but the report was adopted as the basis of government policy. Its proceedings were published in full at a reasonable price and were avidly read by educated people throughout the Protectorate. Seretse's role in the select committee on racial discrimination undoubtedly improved his poor image among educated youth and junior African members of the civil service, but Mpho and Matante were still far more glamorous to them.

The use of the term 'non-racial', even by Fawcus in his opening of the Legco session in November 1963, was significant. Seretse was to remain most insistent on the term, distinguishing it from the quota-based and powersharing systems of 'multi-racialism'. The concept appears to have had its origins among Trotskyists and members of the tiny Liberal Party in South Africa in the late 1950s. But it did not become widely known until it was popularized by Rev Colin Morris and Kenneth Kaunda in Northern Rhodesia in about 1960.9 Seretse probably acquired his appreciation of 'non-racialism' from contacts with Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP). Ruth's sister Muriel Sanderson, who had migrated as a Congregational Church worker with her husband from England to Northern Rhodesia's Copperbelt, was a member of UNIP.

After the barriers of social discrimination on racial grounds came down among colonial administrators around November 1961, those who had not previously known him soon discovered that Seretse Khama was a 'good chap' - considerably more cosmopolitan and sophisticated than most of the administrators. But the administration, and Fawcus in particular, reacted strongly against the idea that the B.D.P. was somehow 'Fawcus's party'. Given the multi-community nature of the Legco constitution, they were more worried about the currency of this idea among whites and chiefs than among the demagogues of the B.P.P. Fawcus refused to treat Seretse as the leader of a political party, and placed him lower in precedence than Kgosi Bathoen and Kgosi Makgosi. Bathoen and Mokgosi, however, were reluctant speakers in Legco and were only in their element in the African Council where 'tribal' traditionalists predominated. Bathoen was chairman of both the African Council and its standing committee, and looked down on Seretse as a mere member. Meetings of this council, a larger body than Legco, were held to thrash out issues in much more animated debate than before the rather staid Legco sessions. Seretse as a mere member did not make any great contribution to debate, but occasionally indulged himself instead in his favourite pastime of goading Bathoen and the other chiefs - particularly in discussing reform of customary law and local government in a sub-committee after April 1963.

It was the combination of Seretse Khama and Quett Masire, rather than just Seretse himself, which inspired the confidence of the colonial administration in
the Democratic Party. Older officers were much more at ease with Seretse, but it is only fair to say that the new breed of bureaucrats, handpicked by Fawcus to counteract the dull mettle in parts of the service, saw Seretse as lacking the necessary single-mindedness and commitment for political leadership. They saw Masire as the more effective, energetic and pliable politician. Fawcus encouraged the friendship between Masire and Bob Edwards, a young American who had been recruited from the Maxwell School of Public Administration at Syracuse University to work in the Secretariat. With Edwards's help, Masire beavered away during budget sessions, attacking the lack of imagination and financial conservatism of the old guard who ran the Department of Finance. There was a private and unofficial debate among administrators, continuing beyond independence, as to whether the talents of Seretse or of Masire were the more suitable for taking the country into a new era. (Much as in Swaziland where Simon Sishayi Nxumalo was seen as Masire's equivalent.) The debate did not trouble Seretse: he was quite happy to describe himself as 'Quett Masire's Assistant Minister of Finance.' Over time the relationship between the two men was to become a symbiotic one, with Masire as dependent on Seretse's principled chairmanship and sense of purpose as Seretse was on his energies.

The constitutional future of Bechuanaland remained unclear. There was still the vague assumption that it might eventually join the Central African Federation. But the British government began to dismantle the Federation towards the end of 1962, when it recognized the right of Nyasaland (soon to be 'Malawi') and Northern Rhodesia (soon to be 'Zambia') to go their separate ways from Southern Rhodesia. In May 1962 Peter Fawcus had talked of internal self-government 'towards the end of the decade.' When he opened Legco on July 15th, 1962, he had said 'it would be irresponsible to seek to introduce a new formal constitution in 1963,' though a review of the present constitution should be conducted. Sir John Maud was even more restrained in addressing the students of Moeng College, the only sizeable senior secondary school in the country, on August 31st: 'During perhaps the next 20 years of their lives the Tswana nation, he said, would come of age ... [in a] transition to self-government.'

However, in April 1963, it was announced that two African and two European members of Legco would become 'members associated with government business' in the Executive Council (Exco). They would effectively be Cabinet ministers responsible to their fellow Legco members for separate portfolios. Seretse and Bathoen were appointed from the African benches; Seretse being given the portfolio of constitutional and racial [sic] affairs. At the first annual general conference of the B.D.P., held in Francistown during April 1963, the party committed itself to opening up the political system at both national and local district levels to democratic processes - and to face up to the problems of schooling, access to health clinics and the prevailing drought. The party now had a clear and simple political programme,
but it needed a platform from which to reach out to the wider public rather than simply to the nascent middle-class.

Taking the message to the people was understood to be the task that would make or break the B.D.P. over the next two to three years. Meanwhile the B.D.P. used the Legco for gaining experience of government, for the tackling of obvious grievances, and for demonstrating what could be achieved by its pragmatism and common sense in contrast to the idealism and militancy of the B.P.P. and its factions. The presence of B.D.P. leaders in the Legco was also to prove vital in formulating the ground-rules upon which constitutional development would be built.

At the beginning of June 1963, the B.P. government invited the public to write in their comments and suggestions on constitutional talks. Letters from individuals and organizations flowed into the Secretariat. Two letters came from Motsete of the B.P.P. He made a plea for the talks to be held overseas, because of 'a prejudiced if not hostile atmosphere' against the B.P.P. on the part of 'local white people generally, including Government officials.' The latter, he claimed, were 'by and large ... in favour of the Democratic Party of Mr Seretse Khama.'

Material on file shows that colonial administrators were indeed hopeful about the B.D.P.'s chances of future success, but they were still sceptical about the prospects of independence in general and about Seretse Khama's leadership in particular. Official minutes appended to constitutional proposals, made in preparation for the talks, express the expectation of a 'competent and responsible ministry' resulting from the new constitution 'if the party which assumed office was the progressive moderate Democratic Party.' The minutes go on to argue against a limited franchise on the interesting grounds that 'universal adult suffrage has the merit in Bechuanaland that illiterate and lower qualification inhabitants are in many cases among its more responsible and conservative citizens.'

Official hesitancy in contemplating full self-government and eventual independence, for a 'mini-state' with less than a million people (even if the territory was the size of France or Texas), could be seen in the nomenclature adopted for top government positions. The drafts opted for the middle-level terms 'premier' and 'council of ministers', rather than the high-level terms 'prime minister' and 'cabinet' (or the low-level terms 'chief minister' and 'leader of government business'). It was agreed to concede, if pressed, the titles of 'prime minister' and 'cabinet, but fundamental disquiet about Seretse and greater confidence in Masire as his deputy emerged in the following:

A specific office of Deputy Premier is suggested to enable a minister to be appointed to assist the Premier in the exercise of his function ... The suggestion is made with particular reference to the needs of the Democratic Party, as Seretse Khama is unlikely to seek to exercise a large range of detailed responsibilities by himself.

Britain was anxious to rid itself of its colonial empire as part of its costcutting exercises. It was therefore reluctant to concede full political autonomy to a state
which could not cover even its administrative costs from its own revenue - depending heavily on an annual British grant-in-aid. Thus the 'council of ministers' or 'cabinet' would be presided over by the Queen's Commissioner, and not by the 'premier' or 'prime minister' and the colonial Financial Secretary would be ex officio the Minister of Finance.

For financial reasons as much as any other, the B.P. administration wanted a constitution that would require little modification if Bechuanaland proceeded from self-government to independence. Similarly it wanted a unitary state with a more or less uni-cameral system, rather than endure the expenses of federalism and a bi-cameral system with separate houses.

...
The 'joint consultations' began on August 21st, 1963. The B.D.P. was represented by Seretse, Masire and Nwako; the main B.P.P. by Motsete, Matante and Motlhagodi; and the B.P.P.(Mpho) by Mpho, Macheng and Tlale. There was an interesting change in the three white delegates; Russell England had been replaced by an Afrikaner, Mynhardt, as England was considered too much of a government stooge.

The talks began with general principles - of which the most important issues were the acceptance of universal adult suffrage and a common (rather than 'communal') voters' roll, and the acceptance of a basically uni-cameral legislature. Fawcus had primed both the whites and the chiefs to accept these principles. The whites reluctantly accepted the falling away of the principle of separate communal representation for whites with the demise of Legco and the institution of one-person-one-vote. But the chiefs do not seem to have grasped that the proposed House of Chiefs would have a very restricted advisory (rather than legislative) role limited to matters of customary law and 'tribal' custom. Fawcus claims that he tried to make Bathoen fully aware of this, but Bathoen was mesmerized by the prospect of an upper house equivalent to the House of Lords at Westminster. He was such a powerful man in the country, second only to Fawcus as an individual, that he simply could not conceive of ever being downgraded. 16

The two B.P.P. parties came to Lobatse expecting a big dust-up over the franchise. On the opening day of the consultations both parties held public meetings in Lobatse 'freedom squares, vociferously demanding 'one man, one vote.' At the opening session of the conference the delegates of the two B.P.P. parties sat somewhat awkwardly as lower class 'new boys' among the other delegates and officials, who were old chums from Legco sessions. The two B.P.P. parties had come to the conference to fight. But they began by turning on each other rather than against the rest.

Matante was furious that Mpho had been invited and threatened to walk out. Chairman Fawcus was not alarmed. He knew very well that as long as Mpho sat at the meeting, Matante would be forced to sit there as well. '7 All evidence suggests that Fawcus had made careful plans to take the wind out of the sails of the militants. He was determined that they should stay in their seats. They would thus legitimize the whole constitutional process of controlled decolonization in the eyes of the people of Bechuanaland.

The meeting got down to business. The militants were taken aback and totally ill-prepared when the colonial authorities proposed that the privileged position of both chiefs and Europeans should be abolished. Undoubtedly by prior arrangement, the actual proposal for universal franchise was tabled by one of the European delegates, David Morgan. The proposal was put by the chairman and accepted around the table by delegation after delegation without dissent. The two teams of B.P.P. delegates were dumbstruck. The chairman then ruled that since general principles had been settled, they should proceed to consider the proposed constitution chapter by chapter.
Having prepared themselves for a contest of a different kind, the 'wild men' found it difficult to adjust to the minutiae of the further agenda, having insufficiently considered the homework prepared by Tilbury. Matante and

the rest found themselves battling with legal and political implications of the constitution line by line. Mpho recalls that it was with some surprise that Kgosi Mokgosi turned to him in one session and said, 'So you people are also capable of talking sense!' 18

The B.D.P. delegation made most of the running because Seretse and Masire and Nwako had done their homework, and already had their own draft to match against Tilbury's proposed new model, clause by clause. They were generally in agreement with Tilbury's proposals on the powers of a Legislative Assembly - and of a subordinate House of Chiefs, which is where Bathoen, Mokgosi and Linchwe failed to speak up.

Seretse, though he could see the point of Fawcus initially presiding at Cabinet and of a ministry of finance behoven to Britain, was determined to scotch the ideas of 'council of ministers' and 'prime minister'. He succeeded in getting a 'cabinet' and 'prime minister' adopted instead; and the demeaning idea of a deputy premier was dropped. As for the Europeans, their fears of universal franchise and the common voters' roll were assuaged by a subcommittee set up to deal with entrenchment of Fundamental Rights. (A subcommittee which would, as later become apparent, ignore all questions of sex or gender.) All these points were accepted by the conference, though not by formal voting - its consensus being summed up by Fawcus much like a traditional kgosi himself.

The B.P. government and the B.D.P. allowed two very highly significant items relating to electoral qualifications to slip by without raising controversy. The first was that, as in Britain at the time, there would effectively be no postal vote. Thus, at a stroke, upwards of 20 000 Batswana working in South Africa, who were generally assumed to have been more likely to vote for the B.P.P., were denied to chance to vote so long as they were abroad. The second limit on the electorate was that the vote would be limited to British subjects or British 'protected persons' over the age of 21. This (unlike in Swaziland) denied the vote to those whites in BechuanaLand, principally Afrikaans-speaking, who had taken out the new republican South African citizenship. The number of potential white voters was drastically reduced, and thereby the threat of any effective all-white political party was removed. 19

Seretse and his colleagues left the conference feeling triumphant, their self-confidence considerably enhanced. By contrast, the fortunes of all the other parties to the discussion were considerably deflated and declined thereafter.

The Lobatse constitutional agreement of August 1963 shifted the whole playing field of politics in Bechuanaland. The politics at issue were no longer about cooperation and conflict with the colonial authorities, but about principles and policy for a future independent state. Both People's Parties

had had their main platform taken away by the removal of the racially compromised Legislative Council. The two parties had followers and leaders but
no realistic strategy for the future. The B.D.P. on the other hand, as a top-down party, had both leaders and a framework for future policy, but lacked any form of mass vocal support.

The traditional chiefs had been compromised, caught between their wish not to antagonize the potential governing party, the B. D.P., and their much greater fears of the B. P. P. 'opposition' getting into power. Bathoen had failed to grasp the role formerly occupied by his friend the late Tshekedi Khama, as progressive leader of the traditionalists. The role of progressive traditionalist was left to Kgosi Linchwe, the young chief of the Bakgatla, who was himself influenced at this time by the novelist and soi-disant socialist and Scots traditionalist Naomi (Lady) Mitchison.20 But Bathoen, who had begun to rule in 1928, would never concede his precedence over other chiefs. He also seems to have had no inkling that he had been outmanoeuvered until after June 1964, when the African Council had its last meeting and the chiefs thereafter found themselves out on a limb and kept barely informed about the advance to independence.

Matante returned home to Francistown to cultivate his political backyard with local issues. During November 1963 a riot erupted at Francistown, sparked by the protest of B.P.P. women's league leaders against the Tati Company's monopoly on the brewing and sale of traditional beer. The B.P.P. youth league came to the women's support after some women were arrested. A riot ensued: stones and unsuccessful petrol bombs were thrown at police vehicles. Matante had not been directly involved in the riot, but he vociferously defended the actions of both women and youth.21 Matante thereby received a temporary fillip to his popularity in the Francistown area. But the riot was looked upon with concern by people who prided themselves on Bechuanaland's unique reputation as a haven of peace and stability in a turbulent sub-continent. It was the Francistown riot which put paid to the B.P.P. as a credible governing party for the whole country.

Old Motsete was left aghast at Matante's actions. He denounced him and tried to join the Mpho camp, but Mpho would have none of him. Motsete then withdrew with a few followers from Matante and set up on his own in Mahalapye - as 'B.B.P.-3' or B.P.P. (Motsete). His followers were too few in number to constitute a viable political force. He had to endure the cruel jibe of 'one-man-one-party' and ceased to be politically active.

Mpho concluded it was now time to finally dissociate himself and his party from the B.P.P. heritage of factional strife and lack of future vision. Shortly after the Francistown riots, Mpho renamed his party the Botswana Independence Party (B.I.P.) and in so doing was the first to introduce the term 'Botswana' - the name that Bechuanaland was to take at Independence - into the formal political vocabulary.

Relations between the British and South African governments over Bechuanaland declined after the arrest of Mandela in August 1962. In November, when B.P. police boarded a Rhodesia Railways train in Palapye or Mahalapye and released three prisoners illegally detained aboard.22 The three men were political prisoners
from South West Africa who had been arrested in Southern Rhodesia and were now being escorted back to South Africa by S.A police - with a disregard for the legal identity of Bechuanaland, through which they were passing, that was both typical and traditional on the part of South African and Rhodesian authorities. Observers at the time saw this as a small but very significant blow for the sovereignty of the Bechuanaland Protectorate as a nation on its way to independence. In January 1963 the South African government announced that, as from July 31st, 1963, S.A. police road-blocks on the borders with the three territories would become border-posts requiring passports from all travellers as well as the usual requirement of pass-books from Africans. Previous to 1963, such borders were mere farm fences marked by a small road sign. In February 1963 Southern Rhodesia also tightened up on its border regulations with Bechuanaland. As the South African authorities became more successful in their repression of liberation movements, the number of refugees through Bechuanaland began to swell. Bechuanaland was the only safe exit to the wider world, through to Northern Rhodesia and the rest of Africa. The most publicized refugees were Arthur Goldreich and Harold Wolpe, and Dr Kenneth Abrahams. Goldreich and Wolpe flew in from Swaziland in August 1963, after escaping from jail in South Africa. They were among the refugees in Francistown whose East African Airways Dakota DC-3 plane was blown up five hours before they were due to leave for Dar es Salaam on August 29th. (Steenkamp as District Commissioner in Francistown bore the brunt of South African press criticism, and received numerous death threats, because of the protection of such refugees.) Dr Kenneth Abrahams, a refugee from South West Africa, was kidnapped by S.A. police a long way inside Bechuanaland on the road from Ghanzi to Lobatse in August 1963. This resulted in a red-hot political row between Britain and South Africa, after the latter's security police chief described Bechuanaland as 'a freeport for runaways, Reds and saboteurs.' Twenty days after the kidnapping Abrahams was returned across the Bechuanaland border by the S.A. police, its tail between its legs. The South African government was successful in curtailing the freedom of South African refugees in the 'High Commission Territories' in other ways. The Basutoland police obliged by raiding the offices of the P.A.C. in Maseru on April 1st, 1963, and capturing documents which revealed virtually the entire P.A.C. membership and underground military operations in South Africa. Another consequence of the Maseru police raid in April 1963 was the imposition by the British authorities on all three High Commission Territories of legislation making it a criminal offence to plan or advocate violence in a neighbouring country. Bechuanaland's Prevention of Violence Abroad Bill was introduced in Legco in July and passed in November 1963. It was justified in terms of the necessity for 'strictest neutrality towards stronger neighbouring countries with which Bechuanaland must trade to live.' Those whites who had not associated themselves with the August 1963 constitutional talks, but banked their trust and allegiance in the white regimes of
South Africa or Southern Rhodesia, soon realized that they had been out-
manoeuvred in Lobatse. There was a movement to demand the removal from
Bechuanaland of borderland white farming blocks, to be incorporated into
neighbouring white states.
White irredentism took its cue from Prime Minister Verwoerd of South Africa.
On September 3rd, 1963, Verwoerd made a speech offering to 'become the
guardian, the protector or the helper of these adjacent Territories, instead of the
United Kingdom.' One of the three main advantages of South African rule would
be '... we would repurchase or exchange areas wrongly occupied in order either to
include them in the white areas or the black.' This is what appealed to whites in
Bechuanaland: the idea that their Tuli and Tati Blocks might be 'exchanged', for
instance, for Mafikeng or the Caprivi Strip being given to Bechuanaland by South
Africa.28
Verwoerd's 'offer' fell upon stony ground. To the Batswana it seemed strangely
out-dated, as yet another take-over bid by South Africa. South Africa had sworn
even to the United Nations in the previous December that it had no such ambition.
To Verwoerd it was part of his formulating the idea of a South African
'commonwealth' of dominant white and subordinate black states, later to be called
a 'constellation' of states. For the ruling National Party it may have been just
another example of the antiblack and anti-British electioneering for the Boer vote
that traditionally preceded general elections. 29 But white irredentists in
Bechuanaland took it seriously.
A meeting of Tati Block white farmers at the Grand Hotel, Francistown, in
September 1963, was addressed by the virulently racist Afrikaner lawyer J.L.E.
Ras Beyers, who was himself an absentee landlord in the Tuli Block (Farm
Dierkop). Ras Beyers preached against the rule of 'Kaffirs' and advocated
secession. A month later a group of Tuli Block, also mostly absentee, landlords
resident in the Transvaal, attempted to form a political
party - dedicated to the removal of the Tuli Block from Bechuanaland and its
attachment to South Africa. It received publicity by appealing to the United
Nations. But it is at least doubtful if this was ever a serious movement. 30
In November 1963 one of the white members of Legco, old Hendrik van Gass, a
cantankerous but not unliked Tuli Block farmer well known to be an extreme
Afrikaner nationalist, read much of Verwoerd's September speech into the Legco
record. He then presented a motion inviting Verwoerd to come and explain
himself further to Legco. It was not good timing, as Legco members were
smarting under the humiliation of being obliged to pass the Prevention of
Violence Abroad Bill. It is scarcely surprising that van Gass got such short shrift
in the Legco chamber. It was opposed by other white members; Bathoen said he
was unwilling 'even to think about it.'
Raditladi spoke nobly of the future Bechuanaland 'as a multi-racial state of free
people. The course is very clear. That is the destiny for which we live or die.'
Masire scathingly dismissed Verwoerd's speech as 'more of a threat than an offer
... ill-timed and misdirected ... to people who were well aware of the humiliations
and difficulties of Africans in South Africa.' (Seretse was 'absent on account of ill
Van Gass withdrew the motion. Tsheko Tsheko then launched into the necessity for the B.P. to incorporate the Caprivi Strip anyway, to 'provide unhindered access to other African countries.' 31

Russell England devoted much of the next year or so to using his membership of both the Tati and Lobatse white communities to keep the more outrageous white settlers in line with Botswana's advance towards independence. He was rewarded with a knighthood from the Queen in June 1965.32

The pace of constitutional developments towards independence began to quicken, though the British response to the August 1963 Lobatse proposals was not to come until the next year. In November 1963 Fawcus was promoted from Resident Commissioner to Queen's Commissioner ('Her Majesty's Commissioner'). He was now entitled to the powers and privileges of a governor and to be addressed as 'Your Excellency'. rather than 'Your Honour' Vestigial powers remained with the High Commissioner in Pretoria for a few more months, until that office was abolished in 1964. Though not ceasing to be legally a Protectorate, the word was dropped in official documents which now referred simply to 'Bechuanaland' Seretse had been pressing for this revision of the country's title as part of the progress to self-government.

Meanwhile Seretse and the B.D.P. were busily engaged in their own plans for the advance towards independence. The period from the Lobatse constitutional conference onwards was considered as a series of steps towards an inevitable one-person-one-vote election in 1965. They realized that the first step was the need to make political capital out of the disarray in the opposition, and to score points off other parties to broaden the mass appeal of the B.D.P. as much as possible. Masire, as a journalist, pushed the decision to launch a periodic party newsletter in newspaper format. The first issue, titled TherisanyolConsultation, in a mixture of Setswana and English, was published in September 1963. It described itself as 'a horn that will blow to call the people of Bechuanaland from their tribal hiding places and other racial groups, from their racial bigotry to national consultations in frank discussion.' 33 The January 1964 edition quoted with approval the Johannesburg newspaper The World, Masire's former employer: 'Seretse Khama's party is expected to sweep the boards in the Bechuanaland general elections in September if the two factions [of the B.P.P.] cannot form a united opposition.' 34

The contents of TherisanyolConsultation were intended to be read by the literate and passed on to the non-literate, through district organizing committees of the B.D.P. The second and third steps towards a popular election were to expose its leaders to people in all areas of the country and in all walks of life, and to organize district committees. New full-time regional organizers were appointed in December 1963 - Amos Dambe for the north and Leasemane 'Englishman' Kgabo for the south. The February 1964 issue of Therisanyo described them as 'astute men of repute who easily rank among the best men in the Territory ... both ex-teachers with insatiable capacity for hard-work. I doubt if we could find two other men of the same calibre.' In the same issue 60-year-old Archie Tsoebebe was given a valedictory profile as retiring part-time organizer for the north.35
In a country where paved tarmac roads were limited to a few kilometres inside Lobatse and Francistown, Seretse did his fair share of driving on corrugated dirt roads and holding what were, in effect, inaugural meetings for the B. D.P. in rural villages. Hesitant at first in the hurly-burly of political meetings, he surprised humble villagers with his willingness to shake their hands, dispute a point, or share a joke. Masire decided to exploit Seretse Khama as the party's greatest asset - the kgosi who had become a commoner but still retained the authority of bogosi and for some people the charisma of martyrdom. Therisanyo picked up and developed the popular identification of the B.D.P. with Seretse Khama - though Seretse himself was anxious to avoid any cult of personality. Seretse, it seemed, had only to appear in an out of the way village for the whole population to be converted to 'Domkrag'.36 But these appearances began to take their toll on Seretse's health.

In the middle of February 1964 an Executive Council (Exco) meeting in Lobatse was interrupted by a loud and urgent knocking on the door. A policeman entered and approached Fawcus, saying: 'Excuse me, Your Excellency, we have just received a telephone call from Bulawayo. Seretse Khama is dead.' In the stunned silence that followed, Fawcus slowly got to his feet and immediately suspended the meeting, saying, 'Gentlemen, we should not pay heed to rumours.' Fawcus went away to see what more he could find out. Seretse was not dead but seriously ill with bronchial pneumonia. He had been rushed to a hospital in Francistown. Masire heard the news via the police radio network deep in the Kalahari, and rushed to Seretse's bedside - 33 hours of rough driving with very little sleep on the way. But by the time Masire arrived, Seretse was over the worst part of the crisis and was able to talk encouragingly on political matters. Masire went in his place to Washington, D.C., to attend an international development conference of the World Bank at the end of February. Fawcus saw Seretse in Serowe on March 8th and reported that he was responding to a massive six-week course of penicillin to clear up the abcess on his lung.17 Seretse was too ill to present the Racial Discrimination Bill to Legco in March 1964. (It passed after being opposed by Mynhardt and Haskins who claimed it was outdated because racial discrimination was already 'dead'.) Seretse was also too ill to attend the B.D.P. party conference held in Lobatse on March 28th-29th, but sent a carefully worded message which was read to the delegates. After expressing his thanks for messages of goodwill, and acknowledgement of Ruth's diligent care during his illness, his message dwelt on the party's successes - the Therisanyo newspaper, lobbying for legislation for 'nationalization' of the abattoir and against racial discrimination in Legco, and 'the spirit of give and take' which had made the Lobatse constitutional talks so successful for the B.D.P. He concluded by encouraging the delegates to prepare diligently for the elections.38 By May it appears that Seretse was well enough to go with Ruth to Northern Rhodesia, to accept the long-standing invitation of Prime Minister Kenneth Kaunda who now headed a government advancing rapidly towards independence. The initial contact had been made, as already remarked, through Ruth's sister
Muriel as a member of Kaunda's United National Independence Party. Matante of the B.P.P. had previously expended much time and energy in cultivating Kaunda and UNIP. But it appears that the two men did not get on particularly well, and UNIP's scepticism about the B.P.P. was no doubt reinforced by news of its internal squabbles. Seretse and Kaunda, by contrast, seem to have got on like a house on fire from the start, united by common sensibilities about non-racialism and a mutual playfulness and delight in good humour. But UNIP and the Lusaka press were to remain sceptical about the African nationalist credentials of Seretse and the B.D.P. for some years hence.

At long last, on June 2nd, 1964, the British government announced and published its acceptance, with a few minor modifications, of the August 1963 constitutional proposals. But the news was tinged with great sadness because David Robinson, Seretse's right-hand man among colonial administrators, had been killed in a car crash on the day before, while on leave in England. An inspirational figure, even among the youthful anticolonialists of Moeng College, he would surely have taken the administration - quite possibly as a citizen - through the early years of independence as head of the civil service.

There was then a premature rush to the vote. The expectation was that elections would be held in November 1964, and candidates would need to be able to familiarize themselves with their constituencies before the first rains made travel difficult. A four-man government commission got down to delimiting parliamentary constituencies on the basis of sub-divisions of existing districts. The B.D.P. then chose candidates for the 31 constituencies of more or less equal voter size (about 20,000 adults). Up to ten nominations per constituency had to be sent in by the end of July 1964, for the party to nominate their choice by the end of August. (Unsuccessful candidates were then expected to throw their weight behind the successful candidate.)

Seretse resumed the national speaking tour interrupted by his illness in February. He began with a surprisingly large political meeting in a 'freedom square' in Francistown - the B.P.P.'s heartland - on June 14th, using the party loudspeaker system to a crowd that was probably more curious than supportive. Lenyeletse stood at Seretse's side. With a microphone in his left hand, Seretse clenched his right hand to hammer points home. Therisanyo stressed Seretse's views in clear and simple terms: follow Seretse for your children's security, your security, progress, peace, pride in yourself, for a Khama/Calmer Bechuanaland, vote Domkrag. Towards the end of July the B.D.P.'s political campaigning was going so well that Seretse could take time off to fly to the United States of America on his first visit to that country. Thereafter the political campaigning began to flag somewhat. The
news began to sink in that the British government was not prepared to countenance a date for self-government, and therefore a date for elections, until other vital arrangements had been made. There had to be an accurate census to count the population of the country, and the reformation and removal of the administrative headquarters from

Mafikeng in South Africa to accommodation - when built - in Gaborone inside the country. Serious building in Gaborone had only begun after the first significant building contract in the new city, for the telephone exchange (later incorporated into the post office of the main shopping Mall), signed in October 1963.42

Seretse and Ruth were away between July 24th and August 8th, 1964, flying through Salisbury to America via London. In Salisbury they were with their daughter Jacqueline, who was now a pupil at Arundel Girls' School there. It is possible that Seretse also found time to talk with the Rhodesia National Affairs Association, who were keen for him to follow Macmillan, Welensky, Nkomo and Sithole in speaking to their members.43

Seretse managed to pack a wide range of activities into eight days in Washington and New York. He went to the United Nations building on the lower east side of Manhattan Island, treading warily where the B.P.P. had trod before him. He introduced himself, his party and his policies to the Secretary-General U Thant, and to Ralph Bunche the U.N. Under-Secretary for Special Political Affairs. Bunche was a distinguished African-American who had studied and visited the 'very ordinary bunch of pale faces' in South Africa 30 years before, and was a friend of Z.K. Matthews.

Seretse was then taken in to address the U.N. Special Committee on Colonialism, where he urged the members to reassess their views of Bechuanaland. Contrary to the propaganda being fed them by Matante and the B.P.P., the country was progressing smoothly and peacefully to selfrule. He also had the temerity to tell a press conference that 'Bechuanaland could not take part in sanctions against South Africa, because our trade with the Republic [of South Africa] is our lifeblood.'" Other useful contacts made in New York were with the business-financed charitable groups, such as the Ford and Rockefeller foundations, that funded international academic research and bureaucratic links. Here the vital figure was Charles Pifer, a Harvard graduate who had been a friend of Seretse's in the early 1950s while staffing the Fulbright-Hays scholarships office in London. Pifer had since risen to become the chairman of the Carnegie Corporation and 'a recognised leader in American philanthropic circles45

After arriving in Washington, Seretse met President Lyndon Johnson's Under-Secretary of State, Averill Harriman, as well as renewing his acquaintance with the Under-Secretary for African Affairs, 'Soapy' Williams. Seretse undertook one official engagement on his private visit to America. The Bechuanaland administration had negotiated a loan of $3.6 million (equivalent to 2.6 million South African Rand at the time) from the World Bank's International Development Agency for construction of a gravel road from Francistown to Maun. The loan documents were ready for signing.

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Seretse, as a member of the Executive Council, was given the power to sign them on behalf of the Bechuanaland Government.46 Seretse was impressed to find 'a great deal of interest in Bechuanaland and in Africa generally ... all sorts of study groups on Africa springing up in the United States in Universities and other places of learning.' But the prospects for development aid from the U.S. actually appeared to be diminishing for economic reasons.47 Seretse later said that he was seeking aid to counter the drastic effects of drought. One may speculate whether Seretse was also trying to obtain financial backing in the U.S. for his political party. The Therisanyo newspaper was expensive to produce, and there was the need for extensive use of vehicles in the campaign to reach every corner of the country. Initial contacts may have been made, but it seems that Seretse was not successful in raising foreign funding for the B.D.P. at least until October 1964 when he met foreign funders at Zambia's independence celebrations.

Some idea of the arguments that could be used emerges from a secret dispatch produced by Fawcus's deputy, Arthur Douglas, ultimately pitched as much to the U.S.A. as to Britain:

The Democratic Party, though unequivocally pro-West in their present sympathies, may well feel impelled later on to adopt the non-aligned attitude of other new African countries, which to European eyes seems ambiguous; the dangers in this course for United Kingdom interests and for Bechuanaland will be increased if the West withholds substantial economic aid until after independence, as the Communists, particularly China, will not wait until then to exercise their own kinds of influence in Bechuanaland as a means to further penetration into the more populous parts of Africa ... 48

Seretse and Ruth stayed in London for a day, Thursday, August 6th, on their way back to Bechuanaland. Seretse saw a junior minister, Lord Lansdowne, at the Colonial Office. Tony Benn M.P. went over to their hotel to have a drink with them and their 'Bechuana friends'. He found Seretse 'very worried that he is going to be pushed into direct confrontation with South Africa. Benn recognized Seretse as 'a dear friend' but found him 'I am afraid, a real aristocratic African nationalist leader, a bit like the Sultan of Morocco, made secure by the fact that the British persecuted him.'49

The Khama's plane flew on, touching down in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam where Seretse introduced himself to Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta and President Julius Nyerere. In Nairobi Seretse was hosted by his old friend Charles Njonjo, and he also got on very well with Tom Mboya. But his meetings with Kenyatta and Nyerere were perfunctory. Nyerere may have been biased against Seretse by the latter's friendship with Njonjo, whom Nyerere is said to have despised.50 Seretse and Ruth arrived back in Bechuanaland on August 10th. The trip was fully covered in the August issue of Therisanyo. A trip abroad of a more unpleasant nature followed some weeks later. Seretse had hired an aircraft to fly from Serowe
to an Executive Council meeting in Lobatse. But the plane could not land in Lobatse because of dangerous storms and was diverted by South African flight control to the Rand Airport in Johannesburg. Seretse had of course been a prohibited immigrant in South Africa for 15 years. There was therefore consternation in Lobatse and Mafikeng, and then in Pretoria at the British embassy - the former High Commission Office which still represented the interests of Bechuanaland - and in the Union buildings of the South African government. The latter agreed to turn a diplomatic blind eye, while Seretse was hurriedly driven in a British embassy car on the four hour journey through the western Transvaal over the border to Lobatse.

In the first week of October Seretse, this time with Ruth, was obliged to fly over South African airspace again in order to reach Basutoland, for the inaugural ceremony of the new joint University of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland in Roma in the mountains beyond Maseru. It was Ruth Khama's first view of South Africa, seen beneath them as their Dakota DC-3 in Bechuanaland Airways livery winged its way over the great plains of the Transvaal and Orange Free State.

October 24th-25th found Seretse and Ruth in Lusaka again, having flown in from Bulawayo in response to Kaunda's invitation to attend Zambia's independence celebrations. The connection with Kaunda was to bear fruit soon after Bechuanaland's achievement of self-government when Zambia approached it to maximize its cattle exports to feed the Copperbelt. (Ironically, since Kaunda was a vegetarian.)

It was in Lusaka that Seretse met politicians from Britain's Labour Party who were full of enthusiasm because of their party's victory over the Conservatives in the British elections a week or so before. Among them was Maurice Foley, who was the secretary of an organization called the Ariel Foundation. This was founded by the British trade union movement in 1960 to give assistance to colonial trade unions, but had now extended itself into helping post-colonial political parties with advisers and possibly money. If the dissident Labour M.P. John Stonehouse's later allegation is to be believed, the Ariel Foundation was the channel through which U.K. secret funds were channelled to the B. D.P. - enabling it to purchase fourwheel-drive Landrover vehicles for electioneering purposes.

Such contacts were no doubt reinforced when Seretse and Ruth flew back to Kenya to attend its independence celebrations in mid-December. The Ariel Foundation had an energetic representative, A.J. Hughes, who was close to Tom Mboya. When Seretse returned home he was interviewed on Lobatse radio (Station ZND), where he told how he had met 'briefly, prominent people from ... Ghana, Nigeria, Malawi, Australia and Malaya.'

There were to be further delays before a date could be fixed for the new elections on a universal adult franchise, because of the enormous amount of administrative change required in the meantime. The colonial Secretariat structure had to be
diversified and converted into interlocking ministries at the same time as the move of the capital from Mafikeng to Gaborone - a distance of 170 kilometres northwards along rough roads. These were, together with voter registration, time-consuming processes operating on a shoe-string budget that took longer than anticipated. The first few houses within the new capital's precincts (low-cost houses on the road later named Jawara) were not occupied until November 1964.11 Shadow ministries, under the temporary care of the Executive Council, were formed on December 1st, 1964. But their Permanent Secretaries were not announced in the Government Gazette until March 1st, 1965. Seretse and other B.D.P. members in Legco closely associated themselves with the development of administration, and fostered a close relationship with the administrators. This understanding emerged in a Legco speech which took its official members by surprise. During the debate on a government White Paper, 'The Development of the Public Sector' (1964), Seretse spoke of the need to preserve a non-politicized civil service, and added: You cannot have a strong legislature and at the same time have a very weak civil service. It would be better to have a relatively weak, or luke warm or mild, legislature. If my opponents come to power, we would depend on the civil service more than on the members, but if the right party comes to power, we would depend on both.56 Perhaps it was the heritage of bogosi, but Seretse was beginning to take on a presidential attitude of somehow being above politics. Both in the Legco and the Executive Council, Seretse acted when he felt it was politically important to act - and at such times was seen to be effective. But the administrative detail of policy rarely captured his imagination. Seretse believed that such matters were for deputies and civil servants. He outlined his general stance to Masire in the following terms: 'A wise man is the one who can make use of the wisdom of others.' In practice, Masire was left in charge of much of the details. (Possibly it was the strain of this work which made Masire inadvertently poison himself by contact with farm chemicals, an accident which put him in hospital for several weeks in late 1964.) Seretse seems to have learned from the mistake of Kgosi Bathoen, who was so concerned with details that he misunderstood the bigger picture. Seretse reserved his energies for strategic decision making, and confidently awaited the assumption of office as Prime Minister. Seretse Khama's national status was such that, as leader of what was generally assumed to be the governing party in waiting, he was already invested with presidential qualities through his (albeit frustrated) inheritance of the qualities of traditional bogosi. When a new kgosi, Letsholathebe II, was installed in Maun in December 1964, it was Seretse who was responsible for 'robing and investiture of the new chief with leopard skins and other insignia of office.' Seretse neatly combined two roles: senior uncle in Letsholathebe's lineage, and representative of the central government. The brass band of the 1st batallion of Britain's Lancashire
Fusiliers stood by to play 'Kgosik Sebotse Afrika' - the Setswana version of the Pan-African hymn. 57
Also in December 1964, Seretse was awarded by the Serowe tribal administration, together with the 'white Mongwato' Dennis Blackbeard, a hunting concession for their 'Bamangwato Safaris' company.8

Fawcus's Christmas message for 1964 on the newly boosted Lobatse radio called for all to 'work for a harmonious non-racial state for the benefit of all.' He identified two great tasks for the next year: self-government and the new capital.59

The new capital town, staked out with metal pegs and tiny flags, 'emerged from the bush' between Gaborone station and the old government camp that became known as Gaborone Village. The most visible sign of the new town from the railway, apart from the shanty village (Naledi) used by construction workers of Messrs Costain, was a 50-metre tall silver metal water-tower shaped like an inverted onion on a stalk. Meanwhile the first two of four large ministry blocks were rising slowly in the bush in the distance beyond the famous morula tree. The main move of the administration from Mafikeng to Gaborone was achieved between February 5th and 20th, 1965. The actual removal was contracted to the pantechnicons and trailers of a Bulawayo company. Some wag pinned a notice to a tree as the dirt road entered Bechuanaland, quoting the motto on Cecil Rhodes's gesticulating statue in central Cape Town: 'Your Hinterland Lies to the North.' It also did not escape notice that the economist A.C. Geddes of 'Geddes Axe' notoriety had arrived in Bechuanaland, albeit ostensibly to study game preservation.60

On February 12th, 1964, on the same day as Station ZNB transferred from Lobatse to Gaborone, Fawcus was able to announce that - for the first time ever among Britain's Resident and Queen's Commissioners of the territory - he was 'now a resident of Bechuanaland.'61

Late in 1964, during a session of the Executive Council in Lobatse, Seretse had been accused by a fellow member, Russell England, of being the 'nigger in the wood pile' on some policy issue or other. Attention then turned to the naming of official residences to be built in Gaborone, including that of the prime minister. Seretse announced:

Gentlemen, I intend to be the Prime Minister of Bechuanaland, and I will name my official residence - 'The Wood Pile.'62

Chapter 10
PRIME MINISTER
1965-66

The constitutional time-table from the New Year of 1965 onwards was a brisk one. On Thursday, January 28th, 1965, the Legislative Council was dissolved
after passing more than a hundred new laws in three and a half years. On January 29th the Privy Council in London issued the Bechuanaland (Constitution) Order, which was quickly laid before the House of Commons for ratification. This enabled the Queen's Commissioner, on February 1st, to issue writs to enable the general election to be held on March 1st.

There was then a mad rush by the political parties to get electioneering underway, with candidates registered, manifests issued and voters converted to the party cause, all within a month. Throughout February campaign posters appeared overnight in villages all over the country - pinned on trees, even pasted on the huge exfoliated rocks that are a feature of eastern Botswana. The B.P.P. posters depicted a black five-angled star on a yellow background and boasted that the party would give the country 'security.' The B.I.P. had a black cow on a green background, and promised to 'stop the sale of land, culling of cattle, and bring in prosperity.' Motsete's party chose a white star on a black background and promised 'security, progress, better prices for your cattle, better medical services, more schools and the feeding of the aged.' B.D.P. election posters used their symbol of a red car-jack against a black background, and the slogan Tsholetsa Domkrag ('Rise up with Domkrag') together with a picture of Seretse Khama. An independent candidate stood on the premise that "people are more important than party."

The B.D.P. was undoubtedly the best organized, having anticipated the timing of the election and the details of registration and campaigning. It was the only party with truly national coverage. One may quote a B.D.P. organizer in the remote Kalahari village of Bokspits on the south-west border who claimed that, even at the end of 1964, local people were proudly identifying themselves as Rona re a MaDomkrag ('Ourselves we are Domkrag'). The organizer added that he had 'no doubt' that 'the masses' were behind the B.D.P. But they needed 'political education,' which required Seretse as party president 'to visit as many places as he possibly can ... The cry is, we want to see Khama.' Seretse attempted to oblige in as many villages as possible before the election. Where he could not appear in person, the B.D.P. manifesto presented him striking a schoolmasterly tone of directness and seriousness:

> The individual vote in your possession is a tool by which you can make or ruin your country's future, your own, and that of your children. You will not, therefore, allow apathy, indifference, the weather, or any unfavourable circumstances to interfere with your duty, but will turn up punctually at 6 a.m. on Monday the 1 March, and do in five minutes what will make or mar your life for the next five years. To those misguided enough to vote for another party, Seretse had the following to say:

> My last word is to this class of voters. It goes without saying that the B.D.P. will win the coming General Elections, and form the country's first self-government administration. Unlike the leaders of certain parties who threaten dire consequences for Government employees who do not vote for their parties, I
wish to say quite unequivocally that I have a feeling of responsibility for all the citizens of Bechuanaland, of all races and classes, whether they vote for or against my party.

The manifesto concluded:
We do not and will not make any extravagant promises, nor claim the ability to achieve the impossible, but we merely appeal to the voters to place our manifesto side by side with those of the other parties, and vote for or against us according to our principles and our intended programme of action.3

On January 13th the B.D.P. announced its slate of 31 candidates, including a European (Ben Steinberg) and one of mixed race (Joseph Anderson). Both the B.P.P. and the B.I.P. delayed any public announcement of candidates until towards the end of the first week in February. The B.P.P. listed five teachers, two ministers of religion, four students, six small farmers, four small businessmen, three clerks, one councillor, one sub-chief, one former labour officer, two carpenters, one tailor, and one journalist. The B.I.P. was the only party to have women as candidates - one clerk, one teacher, one dress-maker. Its male candidates consisted of two tribal councillors, one mechanic, one agricultural demonstrator, 11 small farmers, two small businessmen, three herbalists, four teachers, two clerks, one journalist, and one builder.4

Unlike its opponents, the B.D.P. succeeded in getting all the nomination forms of its parliamentary candidates completed and returned in the last minute rush. The BPP. managed to contest only 26 out of 31 seats, and the B.I.P. only 24. Motsete's independent B.P.P. contested one seat only - his home constituency. The B.D.P. nominees for three remote constituencies of Ghanzi, Kgalagadi and Kweneng West were all elected unopposed, as no other valid nominations were received. Matante himself had campaigned in the Kgalagadi constituency on behalf of a candidate but his party failed to meet the deadline for nomination.5 Observers noted the generally good humour of the electioneering. One story is told of Matante holding one of his regular meetings with a large crowd of supporters on open ground around Francistown. A much smaller public meeting was being held by 'Domkrag' a few hundred metres away. Matante turned and gestured towards the other meeting and spoke a loud aside that everyone could hear: 'Look,' he rasped over the loudspeaker, 'at the B.D.P. meeting of only nine people over there; they are like a group gathered to eat a melon' (Ke bale Madomkrage, ba re dire phutego, mme ba naene o ka re ba ja legapu).

B.D.P. meetings were usually quiet though well populated affairs, featuring educated men standing on the back of trucks explaining their party's policies with loud-speakers. Matante's B.P.P. meetings usually concentrated on /slogans delivered from the platform and chanted back by the audience, sometimes punctuated by the dancing and clapping of the women's league - many of them stately matrons, dressed in khaki uniforms and black berets in a style reminiscent of Wayfarer-Girl Scouts. Warm-up speakers led up to the climax when Matante would appear, a neat bespectacled figure with a frown and a sharp
tongue belying his background as a stump evangelist. To outsiders he looked and sounded not unlike an older version of Malcolm X. Mpho's B.I.P. meetings by contrast were rough and ready, held in the open air under trees, featuring a sequence of speakers with equal billing. Mpho was a gentler figure who mocked and cajoled the pretensions of the high and mighty.

Election day, March 1st, 1965, passed off peacefully enough. Lines of people thronged the poll-booths. The turnout of older women voters, the backbone of rural society, was particularly high. But, given the lack of previous elections based on universal adult suffrage and the secret ballot, no one could be certain of the outcome. The results came in slowly at first, but it became clear that the B.D.P. had won by a landslide. Seretse had easily beaten K.T. Moletsane of the B.P.P. and Klaas Motshidisi of the B.I.P., offered by their parties as sacrificial lambs in the Serowe North constituency. Mpho and Motsete failed to secure seats for themselves. Matante had been elected in Francistown, but his B.P.P. had secured only three seats - two around Francistown and one, more surprisingly, in Mochudi. The B.D.P. had swept off with all the remaining 28 elected seats in the Legislative Assembly. The Democratic Party had been given 113 000 votes against 20 000 for the B.P.P. and 6 500 for the B. I. P. (To these figures one should add the consideration of approximately 35 000 adults who could not vote because they were abroad.) The B.D.P.'s official history claims that the scale of the victory was a 'surprise' 

Reaction abroad to the B.D.P. victory under Seretse Khama was muted by minimal coverage in the international press, as Bechuanaland was considered the remotest of backwaters. Foreign newspapers' interest was confined to South Africa's reaction. South Africa's Prime Minister, Hendrik Verwoerd, sent a cordial personal message of congratulations to Seretse Khama on his victory in the elections on March 4th. He announced that Mr Khama was no longer barred from entering the Republic of South Africa, because his ban had been lifted - without giving notice to anyone - in the previous October. This had no doubt been in response to the diversion of Seretse's plane to the Rand Airport and his subsequent flight over South Africa to Basutoland and back. Verwoerd had a different explanation: 'This was done when it became clear that Bechuanaland had been placed on the road to independence and after I had indicated on behalf of the South African Government that ... this was in accordance with the policy of separate development.'

Seretse was singularly unimpressed by this barbed declaration of friendship. It looked more like a preemptive strike to reduce the impending independent state of Botswana to the status of one of South Africa's tribal 'homelands' or Bantustans. As far as Seretse Khama and his government were concerned, their Republic (of Botswana) would be a state with full sovereignty equal to South Africa's in international law.

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No time was lost in getting the new B.D.P. government into office. Seretse Khama, as the first Prime Minister of Bechuanaland, announced his small
ministerial team - including Quett Masire as Deputy Prime Minister; B.C. Thema as Minister of Labour and Social Services (including Education); David Morgan as Minister of Works and Communications; Amos Dambe as Minister of Mines, Commerce and Industry; M.P.K. Nwako as Minister of Agriculture; and Tsheko Tsheko as Minister of Local Government. As specified by the constitution the colonial Financial Secretary, Alf Beeby, became Minister of Finance. Not everyone approached wanted office. Seretse's cousin Lenyeletse preferred to stay with the realities of local politics in populous Serowe rather than mount the national stage in the tiny new town of Gaborone.

Seretse and the new Cabinet were sworn in on March 9th, 1965, at Government House (later State House), which had recently been opened as the residence of the Queen's Commissioner in Gaborone. Seretse was reported to be both 'happy and apprehensive. Happy at the confidence that 'all the communities in the country had [shown] in his government' through the elections: apprehensive at 'the magnitude of the task ahead.' The challenges ahead were indeed complex. Seretse said he needed to establish the authority of his government, and to promote the movement towards independence whilst ensuring a financial settlement with the British that would make possible the expansion of the recurrent budget. He also needed to promote a famine relief programme against the severe drought the country was experiencing.

Seretse and his ministers followed up their election victory with intensive speaking tours of the country to introduce themselves and to present the people with their new government. They held over 150 meetings in the three weeks before the opening of the new Legislative Assembly and the House of Chiefs. Seretse was careful to follow traditional etiquette and to call on the local chief or headman before speaking. Not that this dispelled all local disquiet. Naomi Mitchison picked up popular perceptions in her diary, after Seretse appeared at Mochudi, referring to him as 'every inch a paramount chief.' Proud to be tribal-minded herself, she wondered if his attempts to reduce the powers of chieftaincy were not simply a ploy for Bangwato ascendancy over the country as a whole.

In his inaugural speech as Prime Minister to the new Legislative Assembly, on March 23rd, Seretse chose to reassure black civil servants that localization would continue, and white civil servants that they were still needed. He also went out of his way to give a special word of thanks to Kgosi Bathoen, who had expressed the support of himself and the new House of Chiefs for the new government. Seretse was gratified that Dr Alfred Merriweather, David Livingstone's symbolic successor as doctor at the Scottish mission in Molepolole, agreed to be Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Merriweather was also to become Seretse's personal physician.

Prime Minister Khama's first official visitor from London was Eirene White, the junior minister for the colonies. She brought greetings from Seretse's Labour Party friends and expressed her delight at the 'full turn of the circle' - a reference to his time spent in exile - that had brought Seretse to power. She was also apparently impressed by the quality of the new Cabinet. On her return, she told an
audience at a Royal African Society meeting: 'Seretse Khama has five headmasters in his cabinet which means that their intellectual quality and balanced judgement is of the very highest order. Of course, it has also meant that they've denuded the schools of five good headmasters.'

Any euphoria was however soon dampened by the return of Masire from an Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference held in Accra, Ghana, during March 1965. Masire had been rounded upon as a puppet and 'stooge' of the imperialists and of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Bechuanaland's self-government and impending independence were dismissed as phony.

Delegates had been primed by frequent visits from Basutoland and Bechuanaland political parties, which were continuing to receive O.A.U. finance as liberation movements. Matante had left the country for Ghana in high dudgeon immediately after the elections, to lobby delegates at the Accra conference with the idea that the whole election process in Bechuanaland had been a fraud. There was also widespread confusion abroad between Bechuanaland and Basutoland. Masire had been flushed with pride at his party's overwhelming electoral victory. But the B.D.P. was equated with Basutoland's conservative National Party which was receiving open support from South Africa's ruling white National Party in current elections. No doubt Masire defended his corner firmly. But he was cut to the quick by the hostility. His feelings were shared by Seretse, to whom Masire reported on his return home.

The B.D.P. celebrated its electoral victory with a ball in the Serowe community centre on Saturday April 16th, at the beginning of its fourth annual congress. The building, since renamed the Lady Khama Centre as it was the product of seven years of planning and fund raising by Ruth and her women supporters, was decked out in coloured bunting for the occasion. The celebrations seemed to foreign visitors to be on the scale of a municipal electoral victory in countries elsewhere.

The 200 delegates at the B.D.P. conference heard from their president what they wanted to hear: 'As a government, your leaders are giving careful consideration to the timing of Independence, and you will be kept apprised of developments in this direction.'

Sir Peter Fawcus continued to preside at Cabinet meetings and to fulfil ceremonial duties, such as the inauguration of the House of Chiefs. He reminded that House, at its inauguration, that it was neither a rival executive body to the Cabinet nor part of the Legislature - but had a purely advisory role. (Did the penny still not drop for Kgosi Bathoen?) Because he knew that the administration could now run smoothly without him, though it was short of talent in its senior ranks, Fawcus made immediate plans to bow out as Queen's Commissioner. He hoped and expected that his trusted deputy Arthur Douglas, a tall quiet Edinburgh man who
had come over from the Basutoland administration in 1959, would be allowed to succeed him.

Fawcus would leave in Bechuanaland a new breed of technocratic young expatriate officers, whom he had handpicked and who would - in the words of one of them, Bob Edwards - 'have gone through fire for him.' These young officers had by now attached themselves to Masire. In mid-April 1965 Fawcus announced his retirement, to Scotland, to take effect a mere month later. (Meanwhile his wife, Lady Isobel, had stood aside for Ruth Khama to become president of the Girl Guides).

Fawcus's motive was apparently to give space for the new government and Prime Minister to come out from his shadow. But people were taken aback at the abruptness with which Fawcus, still a relatively young man, was leaving. No doubt Seretse knew the real reason why. He praised Fawcus's unceasing labours over the years which had enabled Bechuanaland now to 'contemplate political independence in the near future, and economic viability as a goal that is ultimately possible.'

The farewell party at Government House was attended by 350 guests on May 15th. 'After his great victory in the election,' remarked Fawcus of Seretse in his farewell speech, 'it means a tremendous amount to me to see him firmly settled-in as Prime Minister and to feel, as I do, that Bechuanaland is in good hands.' He praised the 'European community' in Bechuanaland for having gone along with constitutional reform, and reserved a special word for Gaborone, the city his administration had created: 'It could become quite a centre of sanity for Africa; or it could become a very ordinary little place, even quite an unpleasant little place.' In reply Seretse went on to echo the words of one of his twin sons about the departing British administrators: 'Why must they go?' In this and other pronouncements Seretse (much like Kaunda in Zambia) betrayed an anxiety to avoid a general exodus of expatriate officers - to avoid a situation in which there was 'localization' of the administration by default rather than by careful planning. Seretse was naive in supposing that existing expatriates were so indispensable. But he was desperate for administrative continuity and effectiveness through the early trials of independence. Neither he nor others yet realized the speed with which expatriate staff could be replaced by high-quality personnel through international recruitment, including those vacating positions elsewhere in ex-British Africa. Similarly, as long as it was properly planned and resourced, the process of localization of staff by training and recruitment of nationals could actually enhance administrative efficiency.

On April 26th, 1965, Seretse and Ruth went to Zambia once more, on a five day visit. They were treated, Seretse later recalled, like royalty. They were taken around to visit abattoir and cold storage works which could take livestock and meat from Bechuanaland, and agricultural research institutions. Discussions with Kaunda had to be 'on very general lines', since Britain still controlled Bechuanaland's external relations. In Lusaka Seretse was also able to meet Barbara Castle, Britain's Minister for Overseas Development.
Events in May and June 1965 underlined Bechuanaland's precarious position balanced between Black Africa and White Africa. At the end of May an envoy from the United Nations' Trusteeship and Non-Self-Governing Territories Committee arrived to check out the allegations that the new governments of Bechuanaland and Basutoland were phony. The U.N. envoy arrived just after the Bechuanaland government had dealt with the problem of 18 refugees from Frelimo (the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) who had arrived from Swaziland by air. Among their number was Samora Machel, who was later to recall with gratitude the hospitality of B.P.P. members such as 'Fish' Keitsing in Lobatse. Seretse had told the press in Lusaka that 'no genuine refugee would be turned back from Bechuanaland' Arrangements were therefore made for the refugees, now 19 of them, to be flown on to Tanzania (the new United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar) via Zambia. The 'refugee pipeline' had been revived as a one-way land operation, by road from Francistown to Kazungula and thence over the Zambezi. The new 'pipeline' was organized by Peter Mackay of the International Refugee Council of Zambia. Refugees accumulated at the so-called 'white house' in Francistown until there were sufficient numbers to truck north.5

In June the Khama family, who had been living temporarily in a 'Type 1' government house, moved into the new Prime Minister's residence. The very names of the roads outside the residence expressed the country's hopes for the future - Matsitama and Makarikari, the names of the copper and salt/soda ash reserves which might be exploited. (After independence the house and plot became the headquarters of Radio Botswana.) But for the present the reality was a heavy inheritance of drought and poverty. The shanty settlement of Naledi on the south side of the new town was bursting at the seams with people seeking work in construction projects. On the same day as the Khamas moved into their new residence, the government's commissioner of labour (Peter Mmusi) had to address a couple of hundred men who were demanding jobs outside one of the new ministry blocks. Seretse and Masire heard them and interrupted a Cabinet meeting to go out and address them. After half an hour the crowd dispersed.6

In July nearly 3 000 bags of yellow maize arrived in Francistown. President Kaunda had been so moved by stories of Bechuanaland's drought that he agreed to the diversion of World Food Programme aid from famine relief in Zambia. Seretse immediately cabled thanks to Kaunda, who was becoming a very good personal friend. Famine relief was placed within the portfolio of the Prime Minister's office in Gaborone. Seretse also expressed his gratitude to the British charity Oxfam which was organizing emergency school-feeding and supplying subsidized sorghum seed. 17

The second week of July saw the first full session of the Legislative Assembly. This time Matante was present, having just arrived back from Ghana and Tanganyika. Matante made his debut by presenting a motion of no-confidence in the B.D.P. government. Seretse suggested that it was not Matante at all who was speaking but Kenneth Koma, the radical
intellectual from Mahalapye who was trying to set up a united opposition front (see below). Not surprisingly, the motion was soundly beaten. Matante went on to raise the question of Ikalanga language rights in schools and on the radio: why were they restricted to use of English and Setswana only? I8

On July 16th a new Queen's Commissioner was sworn in - an outsider called Hugh Norman-Walker. He was appointed over the head of Arthur Douglas, who remained his deputy. He had apparently been chosen because of his financial experience in Nyasaland, but he came too late to Bechuanaland to be able to make any impression on administrative style. He was 'kicked upstairs' into being a powerless head of state. Here again he was hamstrung by the fact that his wife declined to join him in Gaborone to help him make Government House hospitable.

Seretse found Norman-Walker impossible to get on with. Because of his ignorance of local realities, Norman-Walker presided over Cabinet meetings with stiffness and formality. The man made no secret of the fact that he was used to better things elsewhere than could be found in this backwater. Not surprisingly this put the backs of his civil servants up, and made them all the more anxious to be seen to be serving the B.D.P. government rather than a lame-duck colonial regime.

As a result, Seretse became more and more the natural focus of government activities, and of the loyalties of the overwhelmingly expatriate civil service. Power seeped inexorably out of the office of the Queen's Commissioner into the office of the Prime Minister. Arthur Douglas remembers the last quiet days in Government House, gazing over at the ministerial buildings and wondering, 'What are they all doing over there?' I9

Seretse chafed at the restraints of Norman-Walker's chairmanship of Cabinet until the third week of September 1965, when a British Order-in-Council gave him the power as Prime Minister to summon and preside over Cabinet meetings. The office of the Queen's Commissioner continued to receive, as of right, Cabinet papers. Arthur Douglas continued to do the work of the office without receiving the kudos. There was little for Norman-Walker to do except to sample the touristic delights of the country - the Chobe river and the Okavango marshes. District officers in the north got used to arranging a boat and a supply of whisky for him to have a day's fishing.

With Seretse now chairing Cabinet, constitutional progress picked up. He began to speak publicly of 'independence next year.' In October the portfolio of Finance in the Cabinet was formally removed from the colonial Financial Secretary, Alf Beeby, and was handed over to be temporarily included in Thema's ministry. But it was the portfolio which Masire wanted. Having been the scourge of Beeby for years in Legco, Masire had found it frustrating to have to go along with Beeby's ideas in Cabinet under the doctrine of collective responsibility.
The most serious restraint on the Bechuanaland government after September 1965 continued to be Britain's 'reserved powers' over external relations. This was particularly frustrating given Britain's pusillanimous policy towards Bechuanaland's powerful neighbour, Southern Rhodesia whose long expected 'unilateral declaration of independence' eventually materialized on November 11th, 1965. The B.D.P. government was anxious to improve its helpless hostage image in independent Africa, and to develop relations with the U.S.A. and other Western nations besides Britain, with the aim of soliciting development assistance. It was for such reasons that Seretse flew to the U.S.A. for a second visit in the latter part of November.

En route, Seretse and Ruth went for dinner at the house of Tony and Caroline Benn in Holland Park Avenue, London, on November 15th. Seretse had apparently been in hospital over the weekend to check out his diabetes. Tony Benn's diary veers from saying Seretse 'looked pretty poorly' to 'I found him in better form than for many years past.' Presumably they talked about the illegal declaration of independence of the white regime of Southern Rhodesia only four days earlier.

On November 19th Seretse received an honorary doctorate of laws (LL.D) at Fordham University, a liberal Catholic institution in New York City. This was to be the first in a series of such honours from universities that was to culminate in an honorary doctorate from Harvard. In Washington, Seretse and Ruth were hosted by the Zambian ambassador, Hosea Soko. On his return home Seretse made a point of praising 'our Zambian friends' for understanding that the delicate problems of Bechuanaland's political geography could only be tackled by 'a statesmanlike attitude and not just with emotionalism.'

The idea of a united front between the opposition parties against the B.D.P. government was first floated by Kenneth Koma in March 1965. Kenneth Koma, the younger brother of Gaolese Koma who was an activist in Seretse Khama's B.D.P., had just returned from a decade and a half overseas. After university education in England and Czechoslovakia he had gone on to Patrice Lumumba University, the college of higher education set up for Third World students in Moscow, where he had recently had the distinction of being the first African to be awarded a doctorate - his thesis being on the recent Congo Crisis.

Kenneth Koma *worked long and hard' to recruit Motsamai Mpho, Phillip Matante and others in the B.P.P. and B.I.P. to join his united front. Kgosi Linchwe was also interested. The very idea of a 'now classically Communist system of first establishing an overall "Front" Secretariat and by dint of "rigging" ... eventually gain complete and dictatorial control of the Opposition" sent shivers of fear through the Special Branch. It also received the attention of the S.A. security police. One or the other, or both, can probably be blamed for the circulation of several nasty pamphlets in English and Setswana slurring the character of Kenneth Koma. The first one, called appropriately enough 'The Man from Moscow" appeared in Lobatse, Francistown and Mahalapye during August 1965. A second, "Khama and the Millipedes',
surfaced during November, and a third, 'Bechuanaland and Independence', during December. Leaflets of a similar type attacking Phillip Matante had previously been circulated before the 1965 elections. The term 'united front' had good Africanist as well as communist credentials for people, associated with the struggle against racial oppression in South Africa. Thus the P.A.C. had defined the united front as 'an institution of military struggle in the people's war against apartheid.' Seretse and the B.D.P. government, knowing the individuals involved in moves towards the united front, were not particularly concerned about its internal viability. What concerned them was that it could put paid to their hopes of dashing Botswana's image of hostage of the White South and of developing links with the North. The *united front* might attract such overwhelming hostility to the B.D.P. from Black Africa that the elected government would be subverted and possibly overthrown - inviting in turn intervention and recolonization of Botswana by White Africa.

Neither Matante nor Mpho was impressed by Koma, mistrusting his motives. So they left him to go it alone by September 1965. Koma launched his Botswana National Front (B.N.F.) with an inaugural conference in Mochudi on October 3rd, 1965. The first meeting was opened by Kgosi Linchwe, who then withdrew almost immediately on the grounds that he was debarred from party politics as a member of the House of Chiefs. The first president elected by the B.N.F., Linchwe's friend Rydewell (Ray) Molomo, was similarly obliged to deny his membership soon afterwards - as he was a teacher employed by government under oath not to actively engage in party politics. Other prominent members included Fish Keitseng from the B.P.P. and Klaas Motshidisi from the B.I.P., the Kalanga nationalist Daniel Kwele and Seretse Khama's cousin Serogola Seretse. Kenneth Koma himself refused to take public office in the B.N.F., insisting on a backroom role as publicist and organizer.23

The most effective products of the B.N.F. were the pamphlets written by Kenneth Koma, in an appealing mix of African polemics and contemporary Marxist social science jargon. Pamphlet No.1 of the B.N.F. was a strident and challenging analysis of the historical and contemporary conditions facing the people of Bechuanaland. Koma attacked the 'black pro-colonialist government' as the 'heir presumptive' of colonialism, and as even more reactionary than the classic colonial administration that it had replaced. The B.D.P. was nothing more then a marriage of convenience between 'archaic tribal feudalism and the emergent Bureaucratic Bourgeoisie" The pamphlet concluded with a clarion call to 'our poets, our writers, our musicians and other cultural workers to direct their talents against ... traditional conservatism [and] slave mentality.'24

Even Seretse could see that the analysis contained in B.N.F. propaganda was not always wide of the mark. Kenneth Koma perhaps represented to Seretse Khama a sort of nightmare - what he might himself have become if he had stayed on abroad and not met Ruth. Seretse was to become increasingly concerned about the
B.N.F., demanding that his rudimentary security services should keep close watch on their activities. It was a new kind of opposition party quite different from the B.P.P. or B.I.P., which had only been successful among marginalized people in the railway towns. It had a manipulative style of its own, aimed not only at recruiting young left-wing intellectuals but also at attracting dissident elements from traditional society.

Towards the end of 1965, security reports reaching the Prime Minister indicated that the B.N.F. was making dangerous progress among ward headmen and sub-chiefs, whipping up renewed opposition to 'Phuti' rule in the Bangwato district, as well as resentment in the country as a whole against supposed Bangwato rule in the form of the B.D.P. government.

While Seretse was away in the U.S.A. in November 1965, Kgosi Bathoen had come at last to realize the relative unimportance of his position within the new government and constitution. Bathoen rose up in anger during a meeting of the House of Chiefs convened to discuss government's proposed bills transferring the powers of bogosi from the chiefs to elected local councils.

Speaking to his motion of no confidence, he demanded the reconstruction of parliament into two equal Houses. Both his sense of self-importance and his bewilderment were evident: 'I claim to have been in the Government of Bechuanaland Protectorate for the last 37 years, more than anyone else in this House. I have ruled with the fathers of the present [Legislative Assembly], who [now] tell me what power I should and should not exercise.'

Masire rushed down to the House of Chiefs, meeting in the High Court building in Lobatse, and made an emergency appearance to beard his old kgosi and antagonist. Seretse returned from the U.S.A., and was not according to Masire - unduly alarmed. The legitimacy of his government rested on the consent of the people and not that of the chiefs. Masire was more cautious, lest the government undermine the very notion of authority in the eyes of the people. 'Quett' Seretse remarked, 'if only the chiefs could see how much you support them. They would not hate you so much.'

The government went ahead and laid its constitutional proposals for independence, substantially the same as the self-government constitution but in republican and presidential form, before the Legislative Assembly on December 13th. Seretse gave a muted response to an M.P.’s query on the status of the House of Chiefs. Bathoen and the other chiefs responded by a direct appeal to the Queen’s Commissioner on December 30th, 1965:

We believed and hoped that the position of Seretse Khama as chief by tradition would enable him to understand the need for gradual transformation of our traditional customs and ways. Our sympathy with Seretse Khama contributed much to the result of the last election.

The chiefs asked the Queen’s Commissioner to convene a further constitutional conference which would reconstitute Bechuanaland as a federal state with a
guaranteed share of power for the chiefs. Of course their request was out of the question. It was completely against the grain of thinking in all the political parties and among educated people in general, who regarded with contempt anything that smacked of the reconstituted tribalism and 'Bantu democracy' of apartheid in Verwoerd's South Africa. Even Naomi Mitchison, with the ear of the young Kgosi Linchwe, recognized that the letter made the chiefs look like 'a bunch of reactionary so and so's.'

The simple truth was that the chiefs, like the opposition parties, were too late to restructure the constitutional dispensation agreed upon in Lobatse in August 1963. The war had been lost before they were ready for battle. Norman-Walker agreed to talk privately with the chiefs. He politely and firmly rejected the chiefs' notions of a 'House of Lords', and at last won the approval of members of Cabinet in doing so. Meanwhile Arthur Douglas was deputed to put pressure on Seretse for a softer line towards the chiefs - citing the need for 'harmonious relations' between traditional and modern authorities contained in the report of the 1963 Lobatse talks. After further consultation with Seretse, Norman-Walker addressed the House of Chiefs at its meeting on January 1th, 1966. The meeting had been delayed to allow chiefs to consult their peoples on the proposed independence constitution by convening kgotla assemblies to discuss the.

The opening of the House of Chiefs was the last time in the history of the Bechuanaland Protectorate that a British proconsul was given due pomp and ceremony. Norman-Walker stressed the positive role that the chiefs still had even within the context of an advisory chamber. The proposed constitution of the Republic of Botswana was then tabled and introduced by Seretse Khania as Prime Minister. The republic's parliament would consist of a single chamber National Assembly under an executive presidency. There would be no room for a 'House of Lords', only for an advisory House of Chiefs. In the subsequent debate, Bathoen argued that the country 'really consisted of the Chiefs and the people they represented' and that the republican constitution should be be referred back to them. But only minor amendments from the House of Chiefs were placed before the Legislative Assembly on January 24th.

Seretse's cabinet colleagues were men whose experience of life had been limited to the segregated lifestyles of southern Africa. They were beginning to gain wider experience, through attending international conferences and consultations, but looked to Seretse as the cosmopolitan among them to take the lead in relations with the predominantly expatriate civil service and with foreign relations in general. Seretse took the cultivation of foreign relations seriously as part of the presidential portfolio in the B.D.P which would soon become his national presidential portfolio. But for the time being his hands were tied by Britain's 'reserved powers' over Bechuanaland's external affairs.
The biggest immediate foreign problem facing Bechuanaland was (Southern) Rhodesia's unilateral declaration of independence (U.D.I.) from Britain of November 11th, 1965. Bechuanaland was under threat from whatever actions Britain chose to take across its borders into Rhodesia, and from whatever retaliation was attempted by Rhodesia. It was inevitable that Bechuanaland would be drawn into the struggle, even if it was only a war of words.

The Labour government in Britain, having disarmed itself by promising not to use force against the rebels, was anxious to be seen to be doing something to persuade Rhodesia to abandon U.D.I. One such measure was to beam British radio broadcasts into Rhodesia from a relay station at Francistown. Eirene White was dispatched to Gaborone for discussions with the Queen's Commissioner and the Prime Minister, arriving most inconveniently on December 23rd. Arthur Galsworthy, the architect of many independence constitutions for ex-British territories, also came along to give separate advice. Seretse and his family had to delay leaving for their Christmas break in Serowe up to the last moment, owing to two days of discussions with White and Galsworthy. That may have been one reason for his testy response to their mission.

Seretse was expected simply to fall in with British plans for a Francistown radio relay-station, with British troops brought in to defend it. Norman Walker recalls that Seretse became justifiably angry at the way in which Mrs White presented it all as a fair accompli, riding roughshod over Bechuanaland as if it were merely part of Britain's real estate. 'Britain should have acted decisively over Rhodesia long ago. It was also too late in the day for Britain to treat the Bechuanaland government as its pawn, and Seretse said so.

Seretse eventually agreed to the radio station, but under protest at being pushed at such short notice. It was accepted that some of the equipment would become the property of the Bechuanaland government when it was no longer required by the British government. The Francistown radio station, operated by Britain's quaintly named Diplomatic Wireless Service, using B.B.C. relays and transcriptions, was dubbed 'Lord Paw-Paw' by a rightwing British M.P. visiting Rhodesia. It proved to be largely inaudible and completely ineffective, except as a source of 1960s pop music otherwise unavailable.

Illegal independence in Rhodesia was not allowed to interrupt progress towards legal independence in Bechuanaland. Britain, which was sinking rapidly in economic strength and political prestige, seems to have been happy to abandon the problem of relations with Rhodesia to the future government of independent Botswana.

Relations with South Africa were of a different order. As Seretse told his first press conference as Prime Minister, 'we do not like' South Africa because of its racial policies but unlike Rhodesia it was 'a legally constituted regime.' The new B.D.P. government could not as yet see any way out of South African economic domination. The South African government exploited its control of the customs union to treat Bechuanaland like a Bantustan. During 1965, South Africa slapped import duty on Bechuanaland's imports via Zambia of World Food Programme...
aid maize given by overseas donors. When Bechuanaland protested, the South African government proceeded to vote an exactly equivalent sum as 'development aid' to Bechuanaland; and then without any money changing hands used the figure to balance out the import duty in its books. The propaganda coup for the South African government was intensely irritating for Seretse, as it promoted his government's image as the willing dupe of the apartheid regime.

It was going to be an uphill task to persuade the world that Bechuanaland was more than one of South Africa's Hostages - the title of a recent and very influential Penguin paperback book on Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland. The author himself, in a New Statesman article of February 1966, argued that, 'A viable non-racial democracy in Botswana would make a great psychological impact on the apartheid state.' But the damage of his book's title, and its equation of Bechuanaland with the very different territories of Swaziland and Basutoland, had been done.

The Organisation of African Unity (O.A.U.) continued to accept and support the opposition B.P.P. as the sole and authentic representative of the people of Bechuanaland, right up to the moment of independence. The disappointment felt by members of the B.D.P. at the O.A.U.'s attitude was reflected in a resolution of the fifth annual conference held in May 1966:

Conference endorses the suggestion that Botswana should seek membership of the O.A.U., but must strongly regret the resolution passed by this latter organisation at its Accra conference last year, that it would offer assistance to opposition parties in the former H.C. Territories to oust Constitutional Governments in these Territories. This we regard as a flagrant violation of this Organisation's Charter and obviously not conducive to unity.34

Seretse looked upon the situation with a clear head: 'Quett,' he said, 'we will be nothing outside until we are something inside.' By that he meant that foreign respect and understanding would only follow from economic and political development at home. But meanwhile Seretse was working out his own strategy to ensure the acceptability of Botswana in the U.N. and O.A.U. when independence came.

Kgositsegeng Bathoen was chosen as the delegate of the House of Chiefs to attend the independence constitution talks in London. The B.P.P. was also invited to send a delegate, and chose its leader Phillip Matante. But other political parties which were not represented in the Legislative Assembly were specifically excluded by government fiat announced in November 1965. Motsete was furious: in August 1965 he had sent in reams of detailed criticism of the existing self-government constitution. Mpho and his Botswana Independence Party were also annoyed, as was Bathoen's son and heir, Seepapitso Gaseitsiwe, reportedly in the process of forming yet another political party. Comment from the new Botswana National Front seems to have been more muted: it had as yet no pretence of being a parliamentary party with a stake in the constitution.
The B.P.P also saw itself more as a liberation movement than an opposition party and refused to take the prospect of independence under a B.D.P. government seriously. Matante only appeared at the end of the party's annual conference in Tlokweng, the traditional village next to Gaborone, on January 15th-16th, 1966. He did not bother to attend the B.P.P's public meeting held at 6 pm the next day in a Gaborone 'freedom square', attended by 200 adults and 100 children. Theo Mmusi spoke on his behalf instead, attacking Seretse as 'nothing else but a screwdriver in the hands of Wilson [British prime minister] and the American imperialists, he is a stooge ... a puppet.' As for the British radio base in Francistown, it was a 'blue lie' that Seretse had not invited in the troops. The B.D.P. government was a bundle of 'political infants and political idiots ... political chicaneries and political nymidions.' Taxes were high in order to give white civil servants fat pensions to retire on among the Boers in South Africa. Fawcus, it was alleged, had settled in Cape Town.35

Debate on the proposed independence constitution in the Legislative Assembly later in January 1966, however, proved to be tougher than expected,

as the three B.P.P. members realized that this was the last effective moment to spike it. The opposition now took the surprising line of rejecting independence altogether. They highlighted supposed weaknesses of the proposed republic - its vulnerability to powerful neighbouring states, its lack of an army with which to defend itself, and its failure to consult the people as a whole on plans for independence. Seretse and the B.D.P. had their answers ready: Foreign policy would be based on good neighbourliness, and an army was an expensive luxury. If the B.P.P. was not going to enjoy the experience of achieving sovereignty for fear of invasion, that was their bad luck.16

The B.D.P. was getting excited about the prospects of independence in 1966; a committee started meeting in January to plan the independence celebrations. The date for talks on the independence constitution at Marlborough House, off London's Pall Mall, was set for February 14th, 1966. The Bechuanaland team for the talks was small, consisting of Seretse and Masire representing the elected government, Phillip Matante and Kgosi Bathoen, and five colonial officials headed by Norman-Walker.

Before leaving for London, Seretse, Ruth and the children spent the weekend in Serowe. They all enjoyed going back to their home on the hill in Serowe, away from the dust and confusion of Gaborone where so much building work was going on. On the return journey by car from Serowe to Gaborone it rained so heavily that the main road was washed out at one place by a roaring torrent of water, running along what was usually a dry river bed. The Khama family had to struggle across the flood to catch a lift in vehicles on the southern side. It was an inconvenience that made Seretse almost miss the connecting flights that would take him to the constitutional talks on time. But in a parched country such heavy rains were seen as an omen of good luck.

Lord Longford, as minister for the colonies, chaired the opening session, and dropped in thereafter to lunch with the participants. The working chairperson of the sessions was Eirene White, advised by Arthur Galsworthy. By this time
independence conferences at Marlborough House were a well-worn ritual rarely covering new ground. The constitutions, for example, provided for protection against discrimination on ground of race and religion - but never, explicitly, on analogous grounds of gender.

The atmosphere of the talks was brisk and businesslike. Norman-Walker remained neutral and almost silent. It was Seretse who handled most of the points across the table, with technical advice from his officials Jimmy Allison and Alan Tilbury. Bathoen made his expected points. Minor changes proposed by the chiefs were accepted, but suggestions of a federal constitution and a hereditary upper house of parliament were rejected. Whenever the flow of the talks was interrupted and delayed by Bathoen or Matante, Seretse or Masire would outflank them by summing up their contribution and tersely adding the comment: 'Well, we've heard that point of view. Can we now move on to the next item?'

Matante, left without much of a role in the talks, staged a walk-out and did not return even for the closing ceremony. He was insistent on the need for another general election before independence to choose a new government, and on the need for 'proper' consultations with the chiefs and people conducted by an independent commission. Seretse and Masire had little difficulty in persuading the British that sufficient consultations had taken place, and that the Legislative Assembly elected on universal adult franchise should continue to run on its five-year term. They expressed their embarrassment at Matante's rudeness in walking out.

Longford returned to chair the final meeting, and went out of his way to praise Bathoen for the dignity, restraint and elegance he had displayed in putting the chiefs' case. The report on the Bechuanaland constitutional conference was signed by Seretse and Longford, and duly published on Monday, February 21st, 1966. At a press conference after the ceremony, Mrs White commented: 'This has been one of briefest and most peaceful constitutional conferences for some time. Of course it had: the constitution had been all but stitched up two and a half years previously in Lobatse.31

On February 22nd it was announced that the Queen's aunt, Princess Marina of Kent, would represent the Crown at Botswana's independence ceremony on September 29th-30th that year. It as presumably considered appropriate that a relatively junior royal should officiate at the independence of ministates: she was also passing on to the independence celebrations of Basutoland on October 4th. While they were in London, Seretse took his private secretary David Finlay, one of the young men picked by Fawcus, down to the Addiscombe suburb where the Khamas had lived towards the end of their exile. 'Well, Seretse; said an old acquaintance eyeing him in one of the local pubs, 'what are you doing with your life now?'

Before he left London, Seretse was taken aside by Eirene White and discreetly sounded out about whether he would accept a British knighthood. The conversation was so coded and subtle that Seretse left with the impression that he
had accepted, while Eirene White had the impression that he had refused. As a result, the award of a knighthood to Seretse was delayed. This at least is Norman-Walker's account of events. Lady Khama has a different version of the story. She claims that the delay was due to administrative torpor in the office of the Queen's Commissioner. Whatever the truth, Seretse appreciated the honour of K.B.E. (Knight of the Order of the British Empire). He looked upon it as a belated apology from Britain not only to himself, but more especially to his British wife.38

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When Seretse arrived at Jan Smuts airport in Johannesburg on February 15th, to await the connecting flight to Gaborone, he was met courteously by South African protocol officers and led into a press conference. Did he fear unrest in the wake of the coup in Ghana which had topped Kwame Nkrumah? He replied: 'We do not rule by force. We have nothing to fear.' Would independent Botswana send an ambassador to Pretoria? Seretse's response was that Kaunda's offer to send an ambassador to Pretoria had already been turned down, 'And I regard that as South Africa's answer to all African states.' Would Botswana accept private South African investment? Of course, investment from all countries would be welcomed, was the reply.

Several hundred people were at Gaborone's small airport to welcome Seretse and Masire back with cries of 'Pula!' and the blowing of car horns. Seretse emerged from the plane 'looking dapper' and perhaps a little overweight. He made it clear that he had gone to the constitutional talks in London 'with the full confidence that I had the support of the majority of the people of Bechuanaland.' He added: 'Mr. Matante was given a full and fair hearing.' 39

The B.D.P. newspaper, Therisanyo, was quick to crow about the success of the London talks: 'Thus the dream of our people for many years has been achieved under the leadership of the Bechuanaland Democratic Party and of its Government headed by Dr Seretse Khama. It has been accomplished, moreover, without disturbance, without rioting and without loss of blood ... through peaceful negotiation round the conference table by men of goodwill and responsibility on both sides.'40

Matante retreated into sourness and inactivity. A journalistic interview with him, dated June 26th, is a fascinating document, showing clearly the manner of his thinking - the impetuousness of his opinions, and the openended and rhetorical grammar of his thoughts. Is the country ready for independence? Matante: 'In my mind ... the independence of Bechuanaland is nothing else but a national flag and a national anthem ... it doesn't give Bechuanaland anything economically.' The Francistown radio station? Matante: 'The relay station here is in actual fact a bluff ... a military base ... to achieve the so-called Bechuanaland independence.' The B.P.P., claimed Matante, 'have the majority support of the African people through the whole territory.' The B.D.P. had only won the elections because votes were 'manoeuvered' by (British) Voluntary Service Overseas youths trained in London. The B.D.P. 'serves the interests of the British Government.' The imperialists were setting up Bechuanaland and Rhodesia as 'buffer-states' to
protect their investments in South Africa. This 'will definitely lead to armed revolution.' Would Matante allow training camps for freedom fighters in Bechuanaland? Answer: 'The country is too young, really.' Would he allow freedom fighters to pass through the country? Answer: 'If they had proper travel documents.' When would 'armed struggle' begin? Answer: '... in another year or two.'

At the end of March Seretse started a series of tours of the countryside, accompanied as usual by Ruth, to keep rural people informed of changes about to take place - notably concerning local government and the formal power of the chiefs. At Mochudi he teased the Bakgatla about the incident in 1962, saying jocularly that he had had to leave Mochudi 'fleeing for his life, fearing that he and his party might be stoned' to death. He was gratified by the rousing acclaim he was now receiving instead. The theme of 'building a nation' going beyond tribal identities to build a national identity, was repeated with the Bakwena at Molepolole. As Masire put it, there should be no excuse for 'any chief or tribe running away' from their responsibilities to the nation as a whole.

Between April 22nd and 27th Seretse and Ruth flew to Israel as official guests for the country's independence anniversary celebrations. Seretse, with David Finlay at his side, met President Shazar and Prime Minister Eshkol. On his return home, Seretse said he had been 'much impressed' by Israel, which was willing to share its technical knowledge of dry-land farming and water development with Bechuanaland. Israel would also consider medical aid. On his way home Seretse travelled through Lusaka to see Kaunda again.

Meanwhile, other foreign relations with British approval began to pick up. Malawi sent a labour officer to base himself in Gaborone. (Malawian workers were flown to Francistown and sent on by train to Johannesburg via Gaborone.) The U.S. Peace Corps sent its first batch of volunteers to Botswana before independence, mostly to teach in secondary schools. Peace Corps volunteers were not usually sent before a country's independence, but this was a special case: they were diverted from Malawi after Dr Banda decided to expel the Peace Corps as 'hippies', i.e. agents of cultural subversion.

The capital town, Gaborone, was beginning to take shape with the opening of new government buildings for business and the rapid construction of the two-storey President Hotel by builders working day and night in the centre of the projected shopping Mall. The main urban roads were being bitumen surfaced, and streets were being given names. The curving dual-track road that stood at the head of the Mall and enclosed the government enclave was named Khama Crescent after Seretse's grandfather. (The general rule was not to name anything in the city after a living person.) The two streets that framed the almost due east-west Mall were called Botswana and Queen's to emphasize the country's dual heritage. One of the small roads running...
south from the Mall was named Robinson after the late David Robinson. The Mall itself was suitably modest for a capital town expected to have a population of only 19,000 by 1990, with shops limited to either side of the hotel in the central square. Gaborone, often still called by its colonial misspelling 'Gaberones' (i.e. Gaborone's), was proudly proclaimed to be southern Africa's first non-racial town. It was to be divided by social class instead of race: upper classes north of the Mall, lower classes to the south. The area north of the Mall became known as 'England' - a later attempt to sanitize it by calling it 'Badiri' (i.e. Workers) never caught on. A working class area to the south, by contrast, was soon dubbed 'White City' because of its small but smart white houses. On the far south, next to the railway line and the road to Lobatse, the construction workers' shanty village called Naledi refused to disappear but grew instead - as more people from drought-stricken rural areas moved in take the housing abandoned by workers moving to White City.

Drought and famine relief were the main stories continuously carried by The Daily News, the government's free news-sheet handed out on weekday afternoons in the Mall. It reported movements of cargo ships arriving at South African ports carrying supplies of famine relief maize-meal for Bechuanaland. Famine relief was one of the main tasks of the Office of the Prime Minister. Seretse had told the May conference of the B.D.P. that the famine relief programme, originally designed for 65,000 people, was currently coping with 114,000 people - and that approximately half the population would have to be supplied with food before the next rainy season.45

If the short-term economic problems facing the country in the run-up to independence were formidable, the long-term problems were even more so. The portfolio of Finance was now given to Masire, at his request, so that some long-term strategy could be worked out, to help Botswana break out of the cycle of financial dependency on Britain in which it had become caught in order to meet its recurrent budget.

The government desperately needed new sources of revenue to cover its budget, and trained manpower to implement its projects. But from where, none could say. What everyone could see were the increasing demands on government for services and infrastructure, which would increase the recurrent budget still further. At least in the short run there was no alternative but to negotiate with Britain for an increased annual grant-in-aid. Independence without solvency would be a hollow crown.

The old guard of colonial accountants in the Ministry of Finance, headed by Alf Beeby, believed in modest housekeeping and the doctrine of the balanced budget. That meant cost-cutting and tailoring budgets to suit the amount of 'cloth' offered year by year in Britain's grant-in-aid. But there were also young economists in the ministry, led by Quill Hermans, who were instead advocating dangerous ideas of 'deficit budgeting' - going into temporary debt in order to develop the wherewithall to produce more revenue and cover those debts. Hermans was one of the young expatriate officers recruited and
encouraged by Fawcus, and had been associated with development rather than finance in the colonial secretariat. Masire saw him as the one person in the new Ministry of Finance who had ‘his finger on the pulse of the Botswana economy.’ Among the young expatriate economists recruited to Hermans’s side was Pierre (‘Peter’) Landell-Mills, with experience as a development economist in Dar-es-Salaam. Seretse depended on the loyalty of the old ‘finance’ guard, while Masire increasingly associated himself with the new ‘development’ guard. The issue that focused the conflict in mid-1966 was negotiations with the British government over the size of the post-independence British contribution to the recurrent budget and to the development plan. The issue was considered so important that Masire and his officials were joined by Seretse and Norman Walker for the negotiating team at the Ministry of Overseas Development in London’s Victoria district in July 1966.

The new guard favoured an aggressive start to negotiations, and then tough bargaining to secure the best deal for the future. Seretse and Norman-Walker were for a gentler approach. One of the new guard with good journalistic connections, almost certainly Landell-Mills, deliberately leaked sensitive aspects of the talks to the London Observer newspaper, in order to embarrass the British into conceding a contested point. This created a storm in a teacup. Norman-Walker recalls receiving an indignant telephone call from the Colonial Office telling him that they took a dim view of the leak as a negotiating tactic - adding, ‘We don't play those kind of games here.’ It was left to Seretse to successfully smooth over the issue with the Colonial Office. But the fact remains that the Bechuanaland delegation got just about all they asked for. The delegation returned to Gaborone with the promise of support to the tune of £13 million.

While in London, Seretse popped in to see Tony Benn, now a minister in the Labour government, in his office on Wednesday, July 13th. Seretse told him about his ‘residual difficulties’ with Norman-Walker, and ‘the way in which the Colonial Office in London had tried to get him to dismiss [an] economic adviser on the grounds that he was too left-wing.’ Seretse also talked about South Africa’s ambitions to ‘absorb’ neighbouring states into ‘new semi-independent Bantustan status.’ He doubted Britain could topple Smith, and wished that Rhodesian Africans would ‘go home and start a revolution’ - as they were ‘a great nuisance in exile.’ Benn concluded: ‘Seretse is a dear friend and not exactly a revolutionary himself. But I find his comments on life interesting.’

In May 1966 it was announced that Bechuanaland had invited 70 nations to its independence celebrations. The Queen’s Commissioner was officially responsible for the invitations in the name of Her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, though naturally enough the invitations were subject to discussion between himself and the Prime Minister. There was disappointment that so many African and Commonwealth nations turned down the invitation. The African nations were obviously victims of the the
adverse propaganda, so assiduously spread about by the B.P.P., about Botswana's independence being behoven to South Africa. Commonwealth nations presumably saw the independence of so minor a state as an irrelevancy. This left the major problem of what sort of invitation to send to the government of Botswana's threatening neighbour, the Republic of South Africa. (There was of course no question of inviting a representative from rebel Rhodesia.) Norman-Walker knew that Seretse preferred to use a long spoon for any supping with South Africa. Even though the government had decided not to exchange ambassadors with South Africa, it was a matter of common courtesy to invite the legal government of a neighbouring state to send some kind of representative to the celebrations. The Johannesburg Rand Daily Mail greeted the news of South Africa's invitation to the Botswana independence celebrations as some kind of break-through into a 'friendly neighbours policy' on the part of the wary 'Khama Government', which had 'up till now shown a marked formality to South Africa. South Africa had been invited 'months ago' to the Lesotho independence celebrations.47

Negotiations did not end there. Seretse was anxious to preclude any one of the number of well-known right-wingers in the South African government coming to the celebrations. The eventual compromise was Dr Wenzel du Plessis, former South African representative at the U.N. and founding director of the Africa Institute in Pretoria. He was now the Administrator of South West Africa, but the U.N. had not yet cancelled South Africa's mandate. (It was to do so on October 27th.) Tactful arrangements were made through the British ambassador in Pretoria, Sir Hugh Stephenson, who was himself also to be a guest at the ceremonies.

However, it was the opening up of diplomatic relations with the U.S. that was most cherished at independence. Following the 'discovery' by U.S. Navy radio communications experts that the islands of the U.S. state of Hawaii were the exact antipodes of Botswana (running in a line from around Ghanzi through the Okavango delta), the Honolulu Star-Bulletin newspaper had proclaimed a 'Hana-Botswana alliance'. The main U.S. representative at Botswana's independence celebrations was therefore to be Governor John Bums of Hawaii.48

September 30th had been chosen as the date of independence because it was Botswana's national day - originally designated at Kgosi Bathoen's instance in the 1950s. Purely by chance, the evening before the celebrations were to begin was September 29th, which was Seretse and Ruth's 18th wedding anniversary. The national anthem, a gentle lilting hymn titled Fatshe la Rona ('Our Country'), was chosen after a national competition. It had been written, appropriately enough, by the opposition veteran K.T. Motsete, holder of a Bachelor of Music degree from London University. There were also a new flag - bright blue, black and white - and a national coat-of-arms flanked by two zebras, both designed by George Winstanley of the colonial administration, furled and ready for use on September 30th.
Princess Marina duly arrived and the count-down to the moment of independence began. She was to conquer lingering disappointment at the lack of a more senior member of the British royal family, by her warmth and charm. The celebrations began at Government (soon to be State) House on the evening of September 29th, 1966, with a dinner party hosted by the last Queen's Commissioner. The warm evening started well enough, but gradually and unexpectedly the wind rose. The naturally excited diners had to raise their voices even higher to be heard across the table against the cacophony of mighty wind and rattling windows and doors. As people sat patiently waiting to venture outside when the wind dropped, diners recall that John Stonehouse, Labour's assistant minister for the colonies, could be heard even above the din shouting rude stories across his table. Meanwhile the wind howled unabated, dust blew everywhere and the temperature dropped like a stone.

As the time approached for the official party to leave to meet the midnight deadline at the stadium, Gaborone was still gripped by the storm. Norman Walker began to dither about exposing the princess to the rigours of the night. He muttered something about the need to consider postponing the ceremony. Seretse was aghast: 'You cannot postpone independence!' he expostulated. 'It is a legal arrangement. Besides, ceremonies will be taking place elsewhere in the country.' Princess Marina reached into her bag, pulled out a headscarf and tied it firmly over her tiara, indicating her willingness to proceed. Lady Khama had sent for large karosses or tailored furs - suitably perfumed - to keep their knees warm at the stadium. The party's spirits were raised by the added sense of adventure as they set off through wind and billows of sand.

The new national stadium consisted of one elevated stand set against a football field. Understandably, given the cold, dark and windy weather conditions, it was far from being crowded. Just before midnight the British flag was lowered. Then the new Botswana flag was raised by a policeman exactly at midnight, to mark the transition to freedom. The flag, however, obstinately refused to unfurl when the policeman first tugged at its guide rope: after a couple more tugs it broke free and streamed in the tearing wind. Popular tradition adds that a few spots of rain were now to be felt amidst the sand particles - the best omen of hope for the country in the storm that was engulfing it.

British soldiers from the Lancashire Fusiliers did their best to enliven the occasion by firing rockets into the air. But as soon as the rockets were fired, the wind carried them back over the officials on the stand - adding a hint of danger and daring for the people who sat shivering under their karosses and blankets.

It was a very dusty group of people that returned home that night. Seretse, grateful for the support provided by his personal staff over the previous hectic weeks, gathered them together and thanked them all before retiring to bed. A few hours later, on the morning of September 30th, 1966, Sir Seretse Khama was sworn in as President of the Republic of Botswana at a simple ceremony in front of the new National Assembly building. Appropriately enough the Chief Justice who swore Seretse in, Sir Peter Watkin-Williams, was a relative of Sir
Charles Warren who had announced the Bechuanaland Protectorate to Seretse's grandfather 81 years earlier.

Britain's last colonial pronconsuls in Botswana, Hugh Norman-Walker and Arthur Douglas, left the capital shortly after the President was sworn in, taking a steam-train going south from the station. Only a small group of people was there to see them off.

Chapter 11
PRESIDENT 1966-69

The new Republic of Botswana was faced with a foreign policy crisis, a blatant affront to its sovereignty, in its first few hours of life. The African National Congress (A.N.C.) of South Africa and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) of Rhodesia, both based in Zambia, had decided to test the mettle of the newly independent country. They slipped a handful of armed guerrillas from their liberation armies across the Zambezi river at Kazungula, to proceed southwards into Rhodesia and South Africa. The guerrillas, who appear to have been singularly ill-prepared, were quickly picked up and held by the Botswana police within a few kilometres of Kazungula. One or two had been caught sitting under a tree smoking cannabis. They were now being held by the police.

President Seretse Khama's first Cabinet meeting, a couple of days after Independence, considered the crisis as a matter of urgency. The ministers had before them a Cabinet Paper which recommended that the guerrillas should be handed over to South Africa and Rhodesia. The guerrilla infiltration was a deliberate provocation and the African liberation movements ought to be taught a firm lesson that Botswana was not going to allow such escapades. Tempers at the Cabinet table were high, but cooler counsels prevailed.

It was realized that an intemperate reaction, however great the provocation, might have permanently damaging effects. It would give the new republic a bad name in the eyes of independent Africa, and thereby drive it into the arms of the very white racist regimes from which it was seeking to escape. Seretse's claim that Botswana would become a 'non-racial democratic state' would be destroyed at a stroke.

It was decided that the captured guerrillas should be quietly returned across the Zambezi to Zambia. Seretse would seek the good offices of his friend Kaunda to lecture the liberation movements on respect for the sovereignty of Botswana if they ever wished to have good relations with the new Republic. 'Seretse must have found it difficult to believe that his old friends Oliver Tambo and Joshua Nkomo, the leaders of A.N.C. and ZAPU, had supposed him to be so gullible. Perhaps, on reflection, he even saw it as their little joke on him.

Sir Seretse Khama's first major public appearance as President of the Republic of Botswana was on the afternoon of Thursday, October 6th, 1966, when he delivered his Presidential Address to the National Assembly. The assembly - a continuation of the former Legislative Assembly - had been opened
on the previous Friday with an address by Princess Marina on behalf of her niece Queen Elizabeth. Two documents had been tabled: a Public Officers Agreement between Botswana and the U.K., and a Transitional Plan for Social and Economic Development.

The Presidential Address was quietly delivered and carefully reasoned. It outlined not just the aims and ambitions of the forthcoming session, but of the new nation as a whole. Seretse began by underlining his dependence on his ministers and the public service 'to do everything in their power to assist me to discharge my duties to the peoples [sic] of Botswana.' He affirmed his commitment to human rights as embodied in the constitution, and added that his government would 'not tolerate autocracy of any kind' in local or central government. His government would foster national spirit', looking 'forward to the day when the people of this country will think of themselves first as Batswana rather than as members of a particular tribal group.' He then turned to the economy:

Botswana is a poor country and at present is unable to stand on its own feet and develop its resources without assistance from its friends... But we Batswana are not desperate beggars...

The Transitional Development Plan would concentrate on expenditure on secondary education to promote 'localization' of the public service, and water development - including a dam for the 'minerals, power and irrigation scheme' south of Francistown known as the Shashe complex.

As far as foreign policy was concerned, Seretse promised that it would 'be dictated by reason and common sense rather than by emotions or sentiment.' Botswana would not adopt an ideological stance in world politics 'because the histrionics and fulminations of extremists outside this country will not help Botswana to achieve its destiny' It would send envoys to London, Washington and Lusaka, as well as to the United Nations in New York. As far as Pretoria was concerned, 'my Government will pursue a policy of good neighbourliness... We will co-operate with the Republic of South Africa and indeed with any other country in the world as far as our conscience will permit us to do so.'

It was at this point that Seretse added an idiosyncratic note of warning to the speech which took his listeners by surprise: 'The policy of my government will not be one of non-alignment, we will align ourselves with any country or group of countries if our conscience permits us to do so and if such a relationship would benefit the people of Botswana.' This was, as Kenneth Nkhwa of the B.P.P. pointed out in the subsequent parliamentary debate, a flat contradiction of Masire's claim in August that independent Botswana would be neutral and non-aligned in world politics. It seems to have been a last minute change to the prepared speech, in response to the lessons of the Kazungula crisis, as Seretse was to add: 'We will not permit Botswana to be used as a base for the organisation or direction of violent activities directed towards other states, and we will expect reciprocal treatment from our neighbours.'

The note of warning continued:
We have yet to formulate our policy with regard to political refugees, but I can say at this stage that whilst we will continue to offer genuine political refugees a safe haven in our country, we will not permit such people to plan and to attempt to achieve the violent overthrow of the government of any country from within the boundaries of Botswana.

Finally, the President moved to the essential role of the civil service, and in particular the need to satisfy African cries for localization with the need to reassure those Europeans now referred to as expatriates. 'My Government' said President Khama, 'is deeply conscious of the dangers inherent in localising the Public Service too quickly. Precipitate or reckless action in this field could have disastrous effects on the whole programme of services and development of the Government ... potential donor countries might be reluctant to provide aid as they would not wish to see such aid maladministered, and I must again emphasise that we need this aid.'

In the 1970s and 1980s it became fashionable to compare Seretse Khama to a tight-rope walker, balancing his country between independent black Africa and white colonial Africa. But it was to take some years before the success of this balancing act was to become apparent. In the mid-1960s, it looked to people in independent black Africa as if Seretse Khama and Botswana were tilting towards the interests of South Africa and Rhodesia. Seretse had chosen a quiet life for the time being, going along with the established interests of the countries south of the Zambezi that almost surrounded Botswana before pushing new links with the north through the wasp-waist of the Kazungula ferry across the Zambezi. This quiet life in foreign relations was necessary so that the President and his Cabinet could stamp their authority on government in a way that could achieve long-term objectives of internal economic and political development.

The B.D.P. government was most anxious that neither South Africa nor Rhodesia be given the excuse to pressurize Botswana because of the activities of refugees in the country. Attitudes towards refugees within the ruling party were ambiguous. On the one hand Quett Masire stressed the duty to receive 'brothers' fleeing from tyranny. On the other hand, Goareng Mosinyi told the parable about a camel given shelter in a man's house on account of the rain. The camel crawled in by pushing with its head and shoulders, and then destroyed the house when it stood up.

Refugees were regarded with suspicion when they mixed with opposition party activists - and were thus suspected of subversive ambitions. The Special Branch was instructed to keep a close watch on refugees as potential security risks. In practice most South African refugees were affiliates of the A.N.C. or P.A.C., who passed on northwards through Francistown and Kazungula to Livingstone in Zambia.

The refugees who stayed on in Botswana were often associated with small Trotskyist groups unassisted by outside aid. African teachers from the Cape Province of South Africa, who found jobs in Botswana, reasoned that their welcome in Botswana may have been due to Seretse Khama's own background at
Lovedale and Fort Hare. Two such refugees, members of the S.A. People's Democratic Union, were actually deported by the Botswana government in November 1966, but they were allowed to go to Zambia. By contrast, the new Lesotho government threatened to deport all refugees to stand trial in South Africa. This caused a panic among the refugees.

Many refugees and exiles from South Africa settled down as teachers, businessmen and even as bureaucrats, eventually becoming citizens of Botswana. Bessie Amelia Head (net Emery) settled in Serowe in 1964, and began the writing which was to make her a famous novelist by the 1970s.3

With the small crisis in Kazungula still in mind, the Botswana administration prepared legislation relating to refugees for the Cabinet to consider at its meetings, which had by now become the centre point of every senior administrator's working week. The Refugee Act, as passed by the National Assembly, was so harsh that it led to intervention by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. Cabinet and parliament had refused to apply the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees in the act, objecting to the clause giving refugees the freedom to seek employment on an equal basis with nationals. Given the disparity in levels of education between refugees and citizens, the clause would disadvantage Batswana applying for the same jobs. But the U.N.H.C.R. made it clear it would have to abandon its activities in Botswana, forwarding refugees northwards to the rest of independent Africa, if the Convention was not accepted.

U.N.H.C.R. persuaded Cabinet to incorporate most of the Convention, if not all its clauses, as an amendment to the new law - which was taken back to the National Assembly by the unfortunate Mout Nwako on April 24th, 1967. Fortunately the new law had not yet come into force, but the B.P.P. had a field day making fun of Nwako's embarrassment. Nwako had to explain that there were five or six articles on which the Botswana government would reserve its position, but would still try to apply parts of them 'administratively'.4 Cabinet learned that in future they should take specialist advice before legislation was drafted, rather than afterwards.

This was to be by no means the last wobble on the question of refugees. The Botswana government was faced by new ZAPU and A.N.C. incursions from the north in August 1967, and three black Rhodesians were actually deported to face trial in Southern Rhodesia on the initiative of expatriate Botswana police officers. The Office of the President had to issue its police with a stern warning not to repeat such action without its knowledge. Refugees who were expelled were invariably expelled northwards to Zambia. By February 1973, when one Godfrey Beck was handed over to South Africa, it is said that only four out of 4 000 refugees had been deported back to their countries of origin. Beck himself, supposedly a communist, was deported to South Africa after several warnings because he refused to go to 'another Kaffirland' like Zambia.5 Botswana's image towards refugees undoubtedly improved after 1967-68 when the country received widespread approval for taking in 3 000 Hambukushu
peasant refugees fleeing from Angola. In 1969 they were visited by Seretse and Ruth around Shakawe on the northern Okavango delta. Seretse announced the offer of Botswana citizenship to them himself. Hambukushu refugees wove fine reed baskets, with intricate patterning, which attracted wide acclaim in international handicraft markets - under the generic name of 'Botswana baskets'.

At the time of independence, Botswana's main mining prospects were copper from Mmatsitama and salt and soda ash in the Makgadikgadi pans, both west of Francistown in the Bangwato district. But it was to be diamonds at Orapa, south of the Makgadikgadi pans, and copper/nickel at Selebi-Phikwe, south of Francistown - both places also in the Bangwato Reserve now renamed 'Central District' - which were to prove the real beginnings of intensive modern mining in the country. The discovery of the Orapa diamond 'pipe' was already known in great secrecy by a few individuals, including Harry Oppenheimer, the head of De Beers-Anglo American Corporation and Seretse himself, by the time of independence in 1966. Progress in prospecting for copper/nickel, which had begun with the signing of the 'Bamangwato Concession' with Roan Selection Trust (R.S.T.) in 1959, dragged on much slower. Seretse and his Cabinet correctly diagnosed that while development of beef production and exports might lead to solvency, sufficient surplus for significant development of the Botswana economy could only come from mineral exports. But first the mining revenue had to be secured for central government, rather than going to the 'tribal' or district treasury of the Bangwato where the mineral developments were based. Seretse took upon himself the task of persuading the Bangwato to relinquish their communal mineral rights and to give them to the nation. Other 'tribes' were then persuaded to follow suit.

The discovery of the Orapa diamond 'pipe' was briefly announced to the world in July 1967, at the same time as Roan Selection Trust announced the formation of a Botswana subsidiary (Botswana R.S.T. or 'Botrest'). Two months later Seretse was still being cagey about the diamond discovery. He admitted having gone by plane for 'a very enjoyable hour' with Oppenheimer to inspect the area - but claimed they had talked mostly about cattle. 'You only talked about cattle?, asked a journalist. Seretse laughed and answered: 'Amongst other things.' He then explained that he only knew what De Beers and Anglo American chose to tell him, and they had told him that it would take another year to assess the full potential of Orapa for mining. 'We are only hopeful.' he added.

By May 1968, it was confirmed that there were a number of diamond-bearing 'pipes' around Orapa and Letlhakane. Diamond mining was now incorporated into government planning for the 'Shashe complex' - the roads, railway and telecommunications, as well as the electricity and water from a new dam on the Shashe river, which would provide the necessary infrastructure for Botswana R.S.T. mining at Selebi-Phikwe. By November 1968, Harry Oppenheimer himself was remarking, regarding Botswana: 'I cannot help feeling that somehow providence intends that this should be a highly successful and happy country.'
A major anomaly in the structure of the economy blocked Botswana's path towards development - the nature of its attachment and subordination to the customs union with South Africa. It was Benjamin Steinberg, proud 'white Motswana, B.D.P. treasurer and M.P. for Botletle (Boteti), who was the first person in the National Assembly to draw attention to the inequity and iniquity of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). The union was controlled by South Africa and gave Botswana an extraordinarily small income, based on a fixed percentage of SACU's total customs revenue. Steinberg estimated that the Botswana government was losing 3-4 million Rand a year. That might go a long way towards wiping out the budget deficit that made Botswana crawl to the British every year for a grant-in-aid. The customs union was inhibiting the growth of the Botswana economy. Steinberg cited industries using by-products from the Lobatse abattoir, which could not be started without protection from South African imports.10

The British had made a miserable attempt to renegotiate the customs union just before independence. It had merely succeeded in robbing poor old 'Peter' Basutoland, to pay 'Paul' Bechuanaland and 'Paul' Swaziland a little bit more out of the same fixed total. What was needed was a dynamic negotiating team, with an understanding of development economics rather than mere accounting, to tackle the South African giant. The old guard in the Ministry of Finance lacked the will and the ability to do so. It may seem strange to portray the structural change in the Botswana economy between 1965 and 1969, from stagnation to economic take-off, in terms of personalities. But that is how it seemed because there were so few individuals involved.

The Ministry of Finance was headed by the Financial Secretary, Alf Beeby, a 'white Motswana' born in Gaborone. He was a practical accountant, who had risen from the bottom to the top without formal training, after joining the B.P. administration at the age of 17, in 1937. The old guard like him coexisted uneasily with young university-trained development economists in the same ministry. Chief among the latter was the Harvard-educated Quill Hermans, who had been one of Fawcus's recruits. Hermans was assisted by Pierre (Peter) Landell-Mills who had only recently come to the country after previous experience as a planner in Tanzania.

Hermans and Landell-Mills objected to the 'candle-ends' type of recurrent budget penny-pinching which starved the development budget of funds. Much to Beeby's annoyance, they seemed to have the ear of the Minister of Finance himself, Quett Masire. The fat fell in the fire when Landell-Mills was overheard, probably leaning languidly against the doorpost of the minister's office, telling Masire about the need for decisive action to raise the economy's 'absorptive capacity' to use foreign capital aid for development.

Beeby accused Landell-Mills of insubordination, and also by implication censured Masire for listening to him. Landell-Mills was drummed out of the civil service
after a brief hearing in front of the Public Service Commission. Landell-Mills was offered generous terminal benefits, but turned them down. He preferred to fight instead for what could be the most interesting job in the world - developing the economy of a new country from scratch.

Jimmy Allison, the permanent secretary in the Office of the President, got to Seretse first on behalf of the old guard. Over drinks after office hours, the chain-smoking Allison spun a line about the 'youngster' who had undue influence over his minister. It's either him or us, said Allison. Seretse, ever anxious to avoid an exodus of experienced administrators, was swayed.

When Masire tackled Seretse on Landell-Mills's behalf, Seretse responded with the statement 'I would rather lose one man, than lose two or three.' Masire was taken aback: he had to stress how much support Landell-Mills had from himself. 'Do you mean' he asked Seretse, 'if it were two against three, you would rather sack two?' The implication was Masire's own dismissal or resignation. Seretse looked at Masire and said: 'Why are you looking at me as if you have just lost a very close relative?' II

It was at this juncture that the close working relationship between Seretse and Masire came nearest to breaking. For a period of some six weeks, from November into December 1966, Masire only talked to Seretse about the Landell-Mills affair through third parties.

Seretse stuck to his last on a number of scores. First, it was essential to have clear and open constitutional and administrative procedures as a basis for political stability. Landell-Mills had the right of appeal, and there should be no political interference in civil service procedures. Second, Beeby was one of the very few senior 'locals' in the administration. Letting him go would not only make nonsense of localization, but could also show nonracialism to be hypocritical nonsense if a white person rather than a black person was involved. Third, hierarchy had to be preserved within the civil service, the golden rule being that all communications by civil servants outside their department, including to their minister, had to be addressed through the head of their department. Perhaps Seretse also thought Landell-Mills too cocky by half: he had almost certainly been the person responsible for The Observer 'leak' the previous June. Seretse also appears to have had the support of Ruth over his dealings with the personalities involved.

On December 3rd, 1966, Seretse received a formal appeal from Landell-Mills against the termination of his contract. Seretse responded by appointing a three person commission of enquiry, including his cousin Lenyeletse Seretse - an indication of Seretse's concern. Masire meanwhile recruited his own allies. He approached the Botswana Civil Servants' Association, which represented local rather than expatriate officers. The B.C.S.A. secretary Lawrence Lekalake proved anxious to assist. Beeby was not popular with African civil servants, as he tended to associate himself with white South Africans such as visiting businessmen.

The 'Landell-Mills affair' drew attention to the weakness of Botswana's development planning machinery and personnel. In the first major postindependence change in the structure of government, a Ministry of
Development Planning was created under the political control of the Vice-President, separate from the Ministry of Finance. Quills Hermans was appointed permanent secretary, and was soon joined by Landell-Mills as senior government economist. As for Beeby, he took premature retirement to go and live in the South African coastal province of Natal.² Seretse and Masire were personally reconciled. But they continued to be influenced by the different types of colleagues with whom they worked. Senior staff in the Office of the President and elsewhere wore safari suits, even short trousers with long socks, and drank colonial concoctions such as pink gin. They were altogether more chummy with Ruth and Seretse, people of their ilk and generation, than with staff in the Ministry of Development Planning. The latter wore the brightly coloured shirts and ties of late 1960s bright young things. Expatriate development planners were recruited for the civil service among graduate students in overseas universities through bodies such as the Overseas Development Institute in England.

Such young people saw Seretse as a dyed-in-the-wool conservative, and Masire as some kind of radical. Seretse and Ruth were excited by the changes in Botswana society which were making it very different from any neighbouring country. There was an influx of U.S. volunteer teachers and development workers from 1965, after the U.S. Peace Corps was expelled from Malawi by President Banda. Such volunteers, from Europe as well as the U.S., broke the old mould of settler segregation. They could be seen with Batswana friends at the film shows held in the Town Hall, which Seretse and his family often attended. Sometimes Seretse and Ruth were given a wooden dais to sit upon as a royal box at the back of the audience. There was no purpose-built cinema in Gaborone until 1970. It was in the Town Hall that Seretse and Ruth attended the premiere of a Setswana play by L.D. Raditladi, put on by the Botswana Dramatic Society in September 1967.¹⁴ There were also increasing numbers of young Batswana civil servants making their mark. 'Old Tigers' educated at Tiger Kloof before the mid-1950s constituted the political elite in government and opposition. The next generation, now emerging as graduates from the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (U.B.L.S.) had mostly been educated at Moeng College - the only large high school in the late 1950s and early 1960s. (It was civil servants of the Moeng generation who became permanent secretaries in ministries by the later 1970s.) The only campus of U.B.L.S. was in Roma in Lesotho, until a Gaborone campus was opened for teaching in 1971. The university, however, could not even keep up with the demand for civil servants, let alone for teachers in the schools of Botswana. In 1969 there were only 20 Batswana among 200 secondary teachers, while foreign teachers filled 340 of the 1,800 positions in primary schools. Foreign teachers included black South Africans, an ever increasing number of "Zimbabweans" and volunteers from North America and Europe.¹⁵ Seretse kept control of foreign relations as his prerogative, by including the portfolio of external affairs within the Office of the President.
The major problem in foreign policy that Seretse faced as President was quite simply to establish Botswana's genuine independence in the eyes of a sceptical world. There was prior intelligence of opposition to Botswana's membership of the United Nations, on the grounds that - together with Lesotho - it was a mere puppet or hostage of South Africa. The radical African states of Guinea and Tanzania were mentioned as the most likely to make such a case. Both of them might make a similar case in the Organisation of African Unity, and Tanzania might do so in the Commonwealth of former British colonies to which it belonged.

Seretse had used his personal friendship with President Kaunda to make sure of Zambia's vital support for Botswana's application for U.N. membership. Seretse and Kaunda agreed to lay great stress on their common border point in the middle of the Zambezi at Kazungula as Botswana's link to independent Africa. Then, on Independence Day, in a simple but inspired move, Seretse established Botswana's anti-apartheid credentials in one swoop by announcing that the Republic's first representative at the United Nations and ambassador in the U.S.A. would be Prof. Z.K. Matthews. Matthews, it will be recalled, had been Seretse's tutor at Fort Hare.

There could be no more respectable representative than Z.K. Matthews in standing up for liberal values in opposition to apartheid. He had resigned his position at Fort Hare in protest against apartheid in the 1950s, and had also been one of the accused in the great A.N.C. treason trial of 1956-61. He had then become Secretary for Africa in the World Council of Churches in Geneva. This had given him a great range of connections in Africa and in international circles. Meanwhile he and his son Joe had re-established their family connection with Botswana by registering themselves as attorneys in Gaborone. They were entitled to Botswana citizenship because Z.K. Matthews's father had been a Mongwato from Serowe, who had adopted the name 'Matthews' as a migrant to the Kimberley diamond fields at the end of the previous century.6 Z.K. Matthews arrived at U.N. headquarters in New York in October 1966, to present Botswana's case for admission to its ranks. He was accompanied by Moulakgola Nwako as Seretse's Minister of State in the Office of the President responsible for external affairs. Up to this point Nwako had only known Matthews through his writing and reputation. He later recalled:

This was my first trip and visit to the United States, and of course to New York and Washington, but in Dr Matthews company I found myself at home and very well received by people in all walks of life. I was pleasantly astounded at the most friendly reception my delegation was accorded - mainly because of 'Z.K.'s' presence.17 Matthews had actually taught some of the delegates from African countries at Fort Hare, and therefore fell under that category of patriarchal respect reserved for a great teacher. The application to join the United Nations proved no problem at all, and applications for membership of the Organisation of African Unity and of the Commonwealth followed smoothly. This was not to say that the complications of
Botswana's plight in southern Africa or its policy options were fully grasped by those who did not live in the shadow of apartheid.

From October 1966, until his death in 1968, 'Z.K.' worked hard to put Botswana on the diplomatic map and Seretse leaned heavily on him for advice. Such advice comes out clearly in a letter sent by Matthews to Seretse eight months after the appointment to New York and Washington, encouraging Seretse to take a bolder line in foreign policy. It was advice of which Seretse was to take heed:

The country is faced with the need to make comprehensive and longrange policies in relation to foreign policy if the country is not to be overtaken by events. The crisis with Rhodesia, the South West Africa issue, the refugee problem ... all of these are intractable issues which call for examination. The policy of reacting to events as they occur is hopelessly inadequate ... All indications are that Botswana will be right in the midst of the Southern African crisis as it develops in the years ahead. 18

'Z.K.' died after a long illness in Washington's Georgetown Medical Centre on Saturday, May 11th, 1968. Martin Luther King had been assassinated only a month before, and Z.K. Matthews was seen as a man of a similar stamp. The New York times acclaimed him in an obituary, while clergymen extolled his 'steadfast conviction, unyielding faith' at a memorial service in the Episcopal cathedral in Washington. Eight African ambassadors acted as honorary pall-bearers. President Lyndon Johnson told Matthews's widow: 'We ... feel privileged that your Government chose to send him to us as your first Ambassador ... [he] will always occupy a special place in the heart of America.' The U.S. government provided an aircraft to fly the body back to Africa.

Z.K. Matthews was buried in the great open space of Gaborone's new municipal graveyard. Among the thousands who attended were people from South Africa such as Gatsha Buthelezi, then seen as a thorn in the side of the apartheid regime. In a graveside oration, Nwako made it clear that Matthews's death had deprived Botswana of 'the profound wisdom and experience that this great son of Africa brought along into our young diplomatic service.' 19

As part of Botswana's policy of financial restraint, Seretse had laid great stress on limiting the diplomatic service in size and in the number of locations where it was placed - Washington/New York, London for Europe, and Lusaka for Africa. Deprived of Matthews's advice, Seretse took some time before organizing a big shake-up in Botswana's diplomatic representation, and foreign policy in general, in 1969. Meanwhile, on his own initiative, Seretse had already begun to consolidate foreign relations with independent African republics to the north - building on old personal relationships and starting with Malawi and Zambia. In order to build up the image of his country and of himself among its northern neighbours, Seretse made state visits to Malawi and Zambia in 1967. Such contacts proceeded hand in hand with continued cooperation with the
Kingdoms of Lesotho and Swaziland in higher education, and attempts to start negotiations with South Africa over the customs union.

While keeping up friendly contacts with President Kaunda in Zambia, Seretse had begun to recultivate his old London acquaintance with crusty President Banda of Malawi. Dr Banda was a problematic figure, having transformed himself from caring physician in Britain and Ghana to vociferous politician against colonialism in Central Africa. He now ruled independent Malawi as an autocrat, having turned out the younger nationalists who had put him in power, and was putting out feelers of friendship towards the South African government. Malawi was thus going in the opposite direction to Botswana in relations with South Africa, but for the time being held a similar intermediate position between the two camps of collaborators and opponents of apartheid. Malawi itself had an interest in Botswana because its numerous migrant workers were flown to Francistown before taking the train through Botswana to the Witwatersrand. Malawi had posted a labour commissioner in Gaborone in May 1966.20

Seretse first went to Malawi on a state visit as special guest at that country's first anniversary as a republic between July 5th-7th, 1967. He soon found that he was expected to play second fiddle to Banda. Lady Khama recalls that when Seretse and Banda were driving in an open-topped vehicle through the streets of Zomba, the capital, Banda stood up to wave to the crowds. Seretse, as his guest, naturally did likewise. After a few moments Banda turned to Seretse and said: 'You can sit down now: they have come to see me. They don't know who you are.' Suitably chastened, Seretse sat down. Then, at the national trade fair, Seretse had had to sit dumbly by, while Banda opened the show and received public worship from his youth and women's brigades.

At the state banquet, in a Blantyre hotel, Dr Banda had ordered that decorations be worn on evening dress. He cancelled the order when he discovered that Seretse could sport more decorations than he could. His Excellency the Life President invested Seretse with the order of Grand Commander of the Lion of Malawi (1st Division) - giving the 2nd, 3rd and 4th divisions to lesser mortals in the Botswana delegation. But it is hardly surprising that Seretse felt himself a less than welcome guest in Malawi, and his host to be off-hand and even rude. Seretse's speech at the state banquet, in response to Banda's, is of particular interest. Banda had linked Seretse with Chief Leabua Jonathan as 'brave men' because they were friends with Malawi, and by implication with South Africa. He had also tried to put Seretse down by recalling how Seretse had been a mere student while he was a practising professional in London. Seretse gave an extraordinary speech, somewhat rambling and obviously off-the-cuff, but which like few other public speeches got to the heart of his own emotions about race and racialism: I think that the trouble that we now face in the world is caused mainly by the refusal to try and see another man's point of view, to try to persuade by example - and the refusal to meet a rather passionate desire to impose your will upon others, either by force or other means.

Therefore that is why I myself have never been bitter, although at
a certain stage I lived in exile, away from my country, in the United Kingdom for quite some time. I know it seems rather curious and funny that I should say that the biggest favour that Britain has ever done for me was to send me into exile. I had, while I was in that part of the world from which I come and I had been to neighbouring territories - adopted certain attitudes towards a certain race. I disliked them intensely because I thought that they disliked me. I suppose some of them did. It was my late uncle whom I told that I had just no trust at all for any white man. He said, 'Well that is more reason why you should go to the United Kingdom to continue your studies.' He then continued with his memories of early days at Oxford. It was rare for Seretse to dwell again on the events that had once made him world famous. The London Sunday Express had run an illustrated story on the Khama family a couple of years earlier, which remarked on how strange it was that Seretse and Ruth, who had 'stirred hearts and passions' as 'headline news' in 1948-50, were now all but forgotten among its readers. But Ruth and Seretse were to find wherever they travelled in the world that there were many people - their age or older - who never forgot. Ruth and Seretse visited a tea estate and the shores of Lake Malawi, as well as a football match and para-military displays, but it rained every day. Political discussions during Seretse's state visit to Malawi fared little better. Seretse and Banda could not and did not agree on relations with South Africa. Botswana refused to send an ambassador to South Africa or to accept official aid from South Africa, while Malawi wanted both. Botswana was looking north for its salvation; Malawi was looking south. 

The state visit to Zambia on August 4th-8th, 1967, was a complete contrast. No doubt Kaunda had got wind of Banda's mistakes. Seretse and Ruth enjoyed the care with which they were received in Lusaka. As an honoured guest Seretse opened the Lusaka agricultural show on a Saturday morning and then issued a reciprocal invitation to President Kaunda to do likewise at Gaborone's trade fair the next year. On the Sunday, Seretse and Ruth went down deep copper mines at Mufulira and Chambeshi. Political discussions on the Tuesday were more than cordial. Kaunda enjoyed being with a kindred spirit with a sense of humour, who also shared his concerns for non-racialism and natural justice. It was announced that Zambia would cement relations with Botswana by building a high commission in Gaborone, and provision was made for regular intergovernmental meetings. But Seretse Khama continued to receive a somewhat cool welcome in the Zambian press, which persisted in its earlier Pan-Africanist prejudice against Botswana as a politically weak hostage state and Seretse perhaps as some kind of stooge like Dr Banda.
Two weeks after Seretse's return home, guerrilla forces of ZAPU, A.N.C. and SWAPO launched a joint offensive from Zambia against South African and Rhodesian forces in the Wankie (Hwange) game reserve and the eastern Caprivi Strip on Botswana's northern borders. The guerrillas used Botswana territory as a safe haven for retreat and recuperation, and A.N.C. (Umkhonto we Sizwe) cadres were probably trying to cross Botswana to reach South Africa. Botswana was threatened with hot pursuit by Rhodesian and South African forces, and its Police Mobile Unit (P.M.U.) was sent to round up the 'illegal immigrants'.

The captured A.N.C. guerrillas proved to be the biggest problem: South Africa made it clear, probably by threats military or economic, that Botswana could not simply return the infiltrators to Zambia as had been done in October 1966. A total of 25 guerrillas were therefore sentenced in August-September 1967 to prison terms ranging between three months and three years.23 One of the seven longer-term prisoners was Chris Hani, whose assassination 26 years later was to bring South Africa to a crisis point.

This time was perhaps the supreme test of Seretse's tight-rope walking ability between the White South and the Black North. Seretse ducked attendance at what would have been his first O.A.U. summit in Kinshasa in September, but at the same time publicly regretted the Johannesburg Star's description of Botswana as 'friendly or co-operative' towards South Africa. The government also tried to deny that the Botswana police were collaborating in any way with foreign police forces, and official usage moved from referring to guerrillas as 'terrorists' to referring to them as 'freedom fighters'. 24

The question of links between senior police officers in Botswana and South Africa or Rhodesia, lingered on from colonial days. The officer most frequently mentioned was Bill Grant, head of the Special Branch. If this was so, the problem was resolved after November 1967, when Grant got into a bar brawl on the terrace of the President Hotel with visiting British journalists over the word 'terrorist' which he insisted upon using. Grant was injured and subsequently left the country as an invalid.25

Meanwhile South Africa was developing its 'outward policy' of enticing neighbouring black countries into diplomatic and aid relations. Botswana did accept a gift of 12 bulls from the South African minister of agriculture in June 1967, but declined to accept further 'aid'. There was no question of formal diplomatic relations until Botswana diplomats could be treated with respect in South Africa, and such respect was impossible while racial segregation persisted. Meanwhile, Seretse pointed out: 'We talk on the telephone, sometimes we make visits.' Botswana, unlike Malawi, was unmoved when in October 1967 the South African government announced it would allow diplomatic ghettos without racial discrimination in Pretoria and Cape Town. In the previous month Quett Masire had had to decline the offer of South Africa's opposition Progressive Party to address its annual congress, because the South African government insisted that he should abide by apartheid laws regarding transport and accommodation.26
Further sign of Botswana's defiance towards South Africa came in early 1968, when it began negotiations with two leading communist countries, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, towards the setting up of diplomatic relations.

Meanwhile relations with Lesotho and Swaziland were centred on the common institution of the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, in Roma in Lesotho. U.B.L.S. was funded equally by the three countries - though Botswana was so educationally underdeveloped at first that it only provided a tenth of the students. There was some tension over the fact that Seretse was a good friend of Lesotho's progressive monarch, Moshoeshoe II, who was at loggerheads with his reactionary prime minister Chief Leabua Jonathan. But Leabua happily came for talks with Seretse in November 1967, proclaiming, 'I am a great believer in democracy.' He added that a one-party state would never happen in Lesotho while he remained Prime Minister. Seretse had visited Lesotho in April 1967, and went again in February 1968 to officiate as the new chancellor of U.B.L.S.27

In a country where the concept of loyal opposition had not been acceptable to either colonial regime or traditional authorities, parliamentary, and in particular extra-parliamentary opposition-party activity, was too easily equated with sedition to subvert the state. There had to be a learning process on the part of both government and opposition parties after independence.

The B.P.P. under Phillip Matante was not really regarded as a great problem by the government. Masire derided Matante as a 'stage' (i.e. merely theatrical) politician. He was too opportunistic and inattentive to detail to make an effective politician. The endless complaints in parliament of Matante and fellow B.P.P. member Motlhagodi riled the government, but they had a power base only in Francistown and Mochudi local politics and no constituency within ruling circles - however much their barbs against 'white Batswana' officials might appeal to the more dissident civil servants.

Motsamai Mpho of the B.I.P., by contrast, came across as an intellectual and a man of principle but entirely ineffective as a leader outside his home constituency in Ngamiland. He was only a threat so long as he was an unknown quantity outside parliament, but he was elected to parliament in 1969. His main role, as he saw it then, was to keep the ruling party true to its proclaimed principles of multi-party democracy in a state where one party dominated. He always claimed that the B.D.P. owed its power to the fact that Seretse was 'born a chief; but also came to be an admirer of Seretse's personal qualities - which he summed up as patience, politeness and dedication to the nation's best interests.28

Considered much more dangerous was Kenneth Koma, the founder of the B.N.F., a quiet man full of nervous energy but lacking the skills of public oratory, who preferred to take a backroom role in his party, organizing and writing rather than appearing on political platforms. He was an intellectual like Mpho but attracted a much greater following and was a skilled manipulator of other people. Having
failed to entice either Matante or Mpho into his National Front, Koma set about wooing their supporters. Personal approaches by Koma set the cat among the pigeons in the B.P.P., which erupted in a public row between Matante on the one hand and Peter Maruping on the other.

President Khama was kept informed about the covert dealings of opposition parties by the police Special Branch through a system of intelligence committees inherited from the British - most of its deliberations being sealed in the archives for 50 years. The B.N.F., having no parliamentary representation and no stake in the status quo, was the main target of intelligence operatives. Seretse's main worry seems to have been that opposition politicians might obtain foreign support, South African or Soviet, for subversive activities - such as creating disloyalty in the civil service or in the police force (there being as yet no army). There is no reason to believe that Seretse was worried by the concept of an opposition per se. He had personally benefitted from the operation of opposition parties in Britain, and had every reason to promote liberal-democratic ideals.

What little has been made available of intelligence reports shows that Matante was regarded somewhat indulgently for his characteristically wild statements made in 'freedom squares'. On Sunday, May 4th, 1967, 'Matante excelled himself with allegations that the government was about to bring in 32 000 expatriates and had erected a concentra- tion camp for the opposition in Ghanzi.'

Rather more worrying was the report about the B.N.F. compiled by Bill Grant, head of the Special Branch, on August 16th, 1967, which began with the assertion that Koma had been 'thoroughly indoctrinated in communism' to 'gain eventually complete and dictatorial control of the opposition,' and that he had attracted leading members, 'all of whom' had been trained as saboteurs behind 'Iron or Bamboo Curtains.' The B.N.F.'s main aim was now covert recruitment 'particularly within the ranks of the indigenous Civil Service. Its long-term aim was 'large-scale assaults on the youth of Botswana and on the labour front; and its paymasters - 'for some Communist organisation with its headquarters in Moscow' - were Dr John Billingsley, a black American resident in Zambia, and Lady (Naomi) Mitchison, the Scottish novelist and wife of a Labour peer who had attached herself to the Bakgatla since 1962.

Bill Grant's report no doubt contributed to government paranoia about the B.N.F. But it was fear about the B.N.F. undermining the loyalty of the civil service, rather than youth or labour, which caused the government to act. Towards the end of November 1967, while Grant was recovering from his injuries at the hands of the press, the police raided B.N.F. offices to seize copies of the July and August editions of the B.N.F. newspaper Puo Phaa ('Straight Talk') and the duplicator on which they had been printed. A few days later the President broadcast a stern warning to civil servants against 'disaffection” which was implied to be racially motivated. (Tongues were wagging about Philip Steenkamp's appointment from Fransistown to be permanent secretary for Home Affairs a few days earlier.) Motsamai Mpho of the B.I.P., in his self-appointed role as guardian of the constitution, wrote furiously to the Office of the President in a letter dated
November 29th: 'The Botswana Independence Party is afraid that the B.D.P. Government will declare a One Party State, by using the Penal Code which is capable of sending anyone to jail for some three years for his or her criticisms of some government laws.' The letter was brought before the Cabinet, and Nwako replied on their behalf on December 8th that government had 'no intention ... to establish a one-party state', but was determined 'to preserve in Botswana a democratic system of government in which any truly responsible and truly constructive opposition will be welcome.'

Charges of sedition in Puo Phaa were brought against leaders (four men and one woman) of the B.N.F., including Koma, during December. A few days later the President's Christmas message implored people 'not to allow tribal and racialistic sentiments to enter into differences of opinion and the conduct of our work.' (The same edition of the government newspaper that carried the message also made much of the recent marriage of a black and white civil service couple.) Matante of the B.P.P. was expelled from parliament for a day, in January 1968, after too vigorously protesting against the Printed Publications Bill which would register and bring newspapers like Puo Phaa into line. His colleague Motlhagodi had described the bill, amidst laughter, as one which 'will explode behind their [B.D.P.] buttocks like a volcano.' 32

The B.N.F. response was a long statement addressed 'to the Botswana nation and Peoples of the World.' The document made a blistering attack on the lack of localization in politically sensitive government departments such as the Public Service Commission and the Attorney-General's Office. Headings in the document included 'We merely Point Out the Causes of Hostilities; We Don't Cause Them' and 'Better Remove the Cause of the Grievances than Punish Those who React to It.'

Naomi Mitchison turned up at the Botswana High Commission in London in January 1968 to complain about what she saw as a political persecution of B.N.F. leaders, infringing their personal liberties. She was also worried that she might be designated a prohibited immigrant in Botswana, which would put a stop to her annual visits to Mochudi and 'break her heart.' When she intimated that she might be starting a B.N.F. legal defence fund, the High Commissioner told her that that would make her 'not just a critic but a Saboteur' and she would be certain to be banned from entering the country. Later, in her private journal, she justified support of the B.N.F. with the following comments: 'I did not think much of its policies, if any, but I supported it on principle, since it seems to me somewhat impossible to have a "democracy" without an opposition party and I still think democracy is rather a good thing.'33

Though Mitchison excepted Seretse Khama from the conspiracy of (expatriate) civil servants she detected against her and the B.N.F., Seretse felt that she had egged on Kgosi Linchwe of Mochudi. Linchwe was second only to Bathoen in speaking up for traditional chieftainship and was overly enthusiastic about reviving 'tribal' identity though revival of customary practices - which Mitchison
as a Scots neo-traditionalist saw as wholly commendable. However, her influence over Linchwe was thought to have declined since his marriage, in May 1966, to Cathy Motsepe (Princess Makao) who did not get on well with her matriarchal rival. Seretse, like Fawcus, may have seen Mitchison as an 'interfering nuisance'. But she was an asset in raising Botswana's international profile through her writings, and there was no reason to ban her from the country.

The B.N.F. defence fund which was set up inside Botswana attracted numerous small contributions, including some from anonymous civil servants and the three major chiefs of the south - Bathoen, Linchwe and Neale Sechele. The defence fund had given Koma an issue on which to recruit the support of Kgosi Bathoen in particular. On June 1st, 1968, they had 'long, secret discussions' at Kanye during which Bathoen agreed to the setting up of a B.N.F. branch in Kanye in preparation for the 1969-70 elections. Another B.N.F. leader, Daniel Kwele, was meanwhile campaigning to get Bakalanga 'tribalism' in the civil and teaching services onto the B.N.F.

The government decided it was in a no-win situation, and the Puo Phaa prosecution was dropped at the end of July. It was generally felt that the Office of the President, as a result of poor intelligence or advice, had over-reacted against a minor threat from the B.N.E. Seretse may have realized this a few months later when he had the chance for reflection in hospital. Possibly there was also something personal in his reaction to Kenneth Koma. Koma had been one of Seretse's staunchest supporters in the early 1950s, and had even stayed with the Khamas in Addiscombe on vacation from Sheffield University. But he had grown increasingly remote and now there was no personal contact at all between the two men. Seretse probably expected Koma to make the first move, but Koma was too proud to do so.

President Kaunda's state visit to Gaborone in August 1968 visibly demonstrated to the world Botswana's desire to break away from South Africa's clutches. Many Batswana felt that Kaunda's visit marked the true moment of their political independence. 'K.K.' was the current favourite hate-figure among white South Africans, and there were all sorts of threats muttered against him for daring to show his face in South Africa's backyard.

Kaunda's visit, from Tuesday, May 21st to Friday, the 24th, 1968, was the first state visit in Botswana's history. The atmosphere during his arrival at the airport was electric: 'When Seretse took Kaunda to meet the people, some were so delighted that they even tried to kiss his shadow as they passed: Kaunda was the consummate politician, bowing to the masses and waving a bright white handkerchief, ever eloquent and calling for audience response, with a stature and charisma that had escaped Seretse and other Botswana politicians of the time.

Kaunda also arrived a few days after the funeral of Prof. Z.K. Matthews and there was a sense of historic moment in the air.

That night, during the state banquet in the President Hotel, Seretse extolled Zambia as the one country in Africa that appreciated Botswana's difficult geographical position. Kaunda replied that he had come because 'from the time
that I met you I realised Africa had a man of deep sincerity, an honest leader, an able and determined leader of his people.

Kaunda's itinerary the next day began with a tour of the abattoir in Lobatse, a strange venue for a vegetarian like Kaunda but one which was supplying Zambia with beef. On the road back he visited Kgale mission and was taken to the point, within sight of Gaborone, where the South African border juts in from the hills to meet the Ngotwane river. It was made clear to him that a battery of South African howitzers on the hills could pound Gaborone to bits in minutes. Kaunda was suitably impressed: for some time afterwards the spot was known among senior civil servants as 'Kaunda's View.'

On the Thursday morning Kaunda toured Mochudi, being met in the kgotla by Kgosi Linchwe II and crowds of Bakgatla who eventually responded to his cajoling them to shout back 'One Nation!' to his cries of 'One Botswana!' That afternoon Kaunda addressed the ruling B.D.P. in the national stadium, where he assured them: 'My coming to [Gaborone] is a demonstration of our readiness to support not only the principles which you have so far upheld but also to assure you that we are with you all the way.'

On the Friday, Kaunda opened the Gaborone trade fair, and Seretse responded to Kaunda's previous description of himself as an 'agitator' with a remark which threw caution to the wind: 'Why shouldn't we all become agitators if we all sincerely believe that all men have a right to participate, to be given a chance to work in the world' - regardless of race, tribe, religion. Kaunda then took on the assembled South African press who had arrived in Gaborone for his visit, jocularly stating that he did not hate Vorster or Smith as people but only their policies, and took off home for Zambia after lunch.

The impact of Kaunda's visit was acknowledged two months later by Masire in Perth, Australia, when he told journalists that there was much greater understanding in the rest of Africa of Botswana's finely balanced political position since Kaunda's visit and the publicity surrounding it.

Seretse and Ruth recuperated with a three-week holiday after the Kaunda visit. Two weeks were spent watching wildlife on the Chobe river, in the Serondella government rest camp, and one week watching cattle on their farm at Chadibe near Machaneng in the Central (Bangwato) District. Seretse returned to work in Gaborone on Monday, July 1st, but returned to the Chobe district on business in the first week of August. For ten days Seretse toured and talked to villagers, sharing in their feasting on cattle slaughtered for him, and also officially opened the Chobe game park. He returned home on August 16th feeling increasingly unwell.

On Tuesday, August 27th, Seretse's condition 'suddenly deteriorated' and he was rushed the next day by air to the Johannesburg General Hospital for examination by heart specialists. Over the next few days he was reported to be comfortable and progressing satisfactorily - but he had problems with his heart because of the strain put on it by the diminished liver and pancreas functions resulting from his
diabetes. There was widespread concern that Seretse, now aged 47, was dying, but he rallied and gained in strength with Ruth almost constantly at his bedside. He was kept in the hospital for seven weeks under strict diet and medication. The concern for Seretse's health was shared by the South African government. Popular tradition claims that Seretse was put in the same bed and private ward that the South African prime minister H.F. Verwoerd had occupied after an assassination attempt in 1961: the bed having been blessed by Verwoord's own personal witchdoctors.

It was quite possibly these seven weeks which, ironically, were to confirm and strengthen Seretse in his determination to work for the end of apartheid. This was the first time he had been in South Africa, for more than a few hours in transit, since 1945; and he had plenty of time for reflection on its realities from an outside-inside perspective. Towards the end of his period in hospital Seretse made a courtesy visit to Pretoria to convey his personal thanks for his treatment to the South African prime minister, B.J. Vorster. But his main social contacts in this period, apart from his family and visitors from Botswana, were with black civic leaders and white opposition leaders such as Colin Eglin and Helen Suzman who came to visit him in the hospital.

By the time Seretse stepped off a South African air force plane at Gaborone's airport he looked like a different man. He was extraordinarily thin; the suit cut to his previous size hung on him as if on a clothes horse. He was greeted by a praise-singer thanking Vorster's doctors, and by the bells of the Catholic cathedral ringing for joy that the President was alive and back home. The sense of a sea change in Seretse's life, as well as intimations of his own mortality, must have been reinforced by the fact that Ruth's mother was no longer at home after ten years living in the Khama household. Mrs Williams had died on Friday, September 13th, and had been buried in the new Gaborone graveyard in the plot next to Z.K. Matthews. Ruth Khama had had to fly in for the funeral because she had been at her husband's bedside when her mother had died.

Seretse flew back to Johannesburg for almost a week's check-up in the hospital in late November 1968. He seems to have been in reflective mood for the next half year or so. On a visit to London in January 1969, Seretse's old friend Tony Benn found him 'very thin and quiet'. Though not a religious man in a conventional Christian sense, Seretse Khama undoubtedly came to feel that Providence had spared him from death in 1968 so that he could lead Botswana forward. He said so when opening the new session of parliament on June 14th, 1969.41 Seretse flung himself back into work, albeit in his usual manner of consultation and consensus rather than by sifting through huge mounds of documents all by himself. His own experience, and no doubt the neverending tragic reports of deaths of civil servants in car accidents, made him acutely aware that death could remove any individual from the scene at a moment's notice. The key to success was the creation of an ethos and the setting up of structures by which national objectives could be achieved.
The constitution of the Republic of Botswana was predicated on an effective executive presidency, and this had to be balanced against the growth of a strong ministry for national economic development attached to the vicepresidency. Seretse therefore initiated moves to strengthen the Office of the President. New office accommodation at State House had been opened in May 1968, using furniture given by the South African government as an independence present in 1966 - so that Seretse could now work 'at home' with a larger number of officials. Seretse now looked around to strengthen his team of officials in the Office of the President. Jimmy Molefe had left to replace Matthews as U.N. ambassador in July 1968. Archie Mogwe was promoted, and in March 1969 was joined by Philip Steenkamp - whose position as permanent secretary in Home Affairs was given to Jimmy Allison, now removed permanently from the Office of the President.42 Though their positions were to vary in title and function over time, the Mogwe-Steenkamp team was now in place, which was to run external and internal affairs under the Office of the President during Seretse's lifetime. Mogwe came from the educated elite of anglicized Batswana, upon which Seretse leaned heavily for sympathy and advice, with family names that could be traced back one, two or even three generations to teachers and preachers in the service of the London Missionary Society. Other such names that spring to mind, who were to join Seretse in the Office of the President through the diplomatic service, are Gaositwe Chiepe (distinguished from her sister-in-law as Miss rather than Mrs Chiepe) and Lebang Mpotokwane.

Steenkamp was one of the colonial officers who had stayed on as Botswana citizens. The anglicized son of Kenya Afrikaner farmers, he had earned a reputation as a tough-minded but politically progressive civil servant when District Commissioner in Francistown up until 1967. His competence and drive as head of the civil service were not to make him popular, but he helped to nurture a bureaucracy that was, at least until 1980, unrivalled in southern Africa and the continent as a whole for integrity and efficiency. If any civil servant overstepped the mark, he or she would be called into Steenkamp's office for a cool discussion of the matter.

Seretse valued strong policy advice - though he was no one's mouthpiece - and normally backed Steenkamp to the hilt. He was also to back him through the thick and thin of political attacks from extremists at home and abroad who objected to Steenkamp's vital role in running the country. The opposition B.N.F. on occasion expressed its admiration for Steenkamp, but the leader of the B.P.P., Phillip Matante, carried on a vendetta with Steenkamp that dated from their mutual Francistown days. Matante continued to object loudly and continuously about the power given to this 'paper Motswana' - an objection that cannot be said to be purely racially motivated as Matante had expressed the same objection to the appointment of Z.K. Matthews.43

Seretse's initiative in foreign affairs, with Mogwe at his side, was emboldened by contacts with Zambia and Kenneth Kaunda in particular and began to take shape in 1969. Zambia was only the fourth country to open full resident diplomatic relations with Botswana - and the first country
not ‘approved’ by South Africa. (Its cars carried the number-plate CD4: Britain being CD1, U.S.A. CD2, and Taiwan or ‘Republic of China’ being CD3).

Only Zambia and Britain maintained substantial buildings for their diplomatic posts. The British High Commission building in the Gaborone Mall stood conspicuously shadowing the government ministries on the other side of the road. It bristled with radio aerials during the 1960s-70s and was assumed to be an intelligence listening-post for southern Africa. Botswana was rarely a prestigious posting for diplomats. Most countries which had diplomatic relations with Botswana conducted them via their missions abroad - the sensitive via Lusaka, the insensitive via Pretoria. The Netherlands, for example, had to be pushed by Botswana government pressure into accrediting its Lusaka ambassador rather than its Pretoria one.

Seretse recruited a private secretary for information and research, John Syson, who arrived in Gaborone in June 1969 for a two-year secondment to the Office of the President from the Ariel Foundation in London. We have already seen how Seretse first made contact with the foundation at Zambia's independence celebrations in 1964. Seretse knew Maurice Foley and Denis Green of the foundation from his days in exile. Foley was a Labour M.P. and a British minister of state during the 1960s; Green was one of Kaunda's kitchen-cabinet of expatriate advisers. The Ariel Foundation aimed to spread moderate social-democratic ideas in developing countries. It was comparable to the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung of West Germany's ruling party but not as securely financed, and was eventually forced to close after the scandal broke of its being partly funded by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

John Syson's role was to work on raising President Khama's political profile abroad and at home, and to assist in developing a strategy that would take Botswana out into the world - a world that had never heard of Botswana and had forgotten Seretse - and help to attract investment capital into the country. When Syson arrived in Gaborone there were already two significant advances in foreign policy under way. Negotiations with South Africa over the Southern African Customs Union had reached a critical juncture, and communications between Seretse and Kaunda were beginning to bear fruit - in plans for the Botswana-Zambia road link and a common approach to Rhodesia, their troublesome mutual neighbour.”

Optimism was in the air from the end of 1968 that ‘the miracle is now about to happen - mineral developments.’ Negotiations with R.S.T. for the ‘Shashe complex’ had suddenly got serious, and news had got out that De Beers' diamond find at Orapa was “potentially one of the richest ever found anywhere.”

Masire was both Minister of Development Planning and Minister of Finance, straddling them like a rider standing on the backs of two horses. Seretse was happy to leave the details of economic development to him, but Masire kept in
regular touch. When they were both in Gaborone, Masire would come in to the Office of the President for a daily chat. When one of them was elsewhere, Masire would phone Seretse before breakfast. Seretse rose early, before dawn, and Masire was mindful of lower telephone tariffs before office hours.

The mining companies ran circles around the new Ministry of Development Planning at first, with 'chicken-and-egg' arguments about who should start capital investment. But once the ministry got the bit between its teeth, it proved to be highly effective. Its central task was to produce, manage and monitor the government's five-year National Development Plans. The first plan, subsequently known in bureaucratic jargon as 'N.D.P.-I' appeared in 1968. This laid out the government’s potential contribution of development capital (in the form of loans to be solicited from international aid donors) to provide infrastructure for the mining companies.

The ministry then got down to work on a second five-year development plan (N.D.P.-II), which was published in 1970. This was much more comprehensive, mapping out government expenditure of its new income from mining development on tarred roads, rural health clinics and schools, as well as on urban development and infrastructure for the mines.

The other major task of the Ministry of Development Planning was announced by Vice-President Masire in April 1968, when he told parliament: 'For some time now we have been dissatisfied with the Customs Agreement’ and that talks had begun with Lesotho and Swaziland and would shortly begin with South Africa. The renegotiation was an absolutely essential precondition for capital investment in Botswana's mining development, to ensure that government revenue from customs and excise rose in line with growth of imports and exports. Botswana wanted a formula matching the revenue of each country to actual imports and exports year by year, rather than each country being allocated a fixed percentage as before. The ministry also wanted measures of temporary protection for 'infant (manufacturing) industries' in Botswana from well-established industries in South Africa producing the same goods more cheaply.

Negotiations began in earnest in July 1968. But South Africa threw its weight around with the outrageous demand that, in return for accepting a new revenue formula tied to actual imports and exports year by year, goods from Botswana, Lesotho or Swaziland (B.L.S) 'infant industries' should pay duty on entering South Africa. South Africa then landed a much greater blow on the B.L.S. states in March 1969, with the unilateral imposition of a sales tax on the whole customs union, entirely for the benefit of South African government revenues. The Botswana government came out into the open, in a way that surprised observers used to passive acceptance of the South African will in southern Africa, and publicly deplored the South African move. The Botswana delegation returned to the fray with a featherweight fervour 'hat confused and ultimately confounded the heavyweight South African delegation at the customs union talks. South Africa, much to its dismay over subsequent years, was out-negotiated on the revenue formula because it considered other things
more important - the dilution of an 'infant industries' clause, the right to withhold funds from B.L.S. for two years without offering interest, and maintenance of central control of the revenue fund and collection of duty from its ports. Pierre Landell-Mills of the Ministry of Development Planning, deceptively bespectacled and slight, is usually given the credit for having got the South African monster by the tail in these negotiations, which were concluded in the new Southern African Customs Union (SACU) agreement of December 11th, 1969.46 But the realization of 'defeat' made South Africa all the more anxious to resist and discredit Landell-Mills in subsequent negotiations over the Rand currency area. In 1970 the Ministry of Development Planning absorbed the Ministry of Finance which had originally spawned it, to become the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (M.F.D.P.), under Masire as its minister as well as Vice-President of the country. M.F.D.P. in some respects challenged the Office of the President as the premier ministry in Gaborone - dominating the 'line ministries' that dealt with sectors of the political economy such as agriculture, education, health, water development, roads and so on.47 Seretse's own 'outward policy', as he jokingly called it to steal the thunder of South Africa's more trumpeted version, was quite simply to put Botswana on the diplomatic map. It was realized that Botswana had no clear image in the world, and was furthermore still being confused by foreigners with Lesotho and Swaziland. There was a need to go out and solicit diplomatic connections that would counter the common idea of Botswana being a dupe of the West if not of South Africa - and thereby to establish Botswana's credentials as a non-aligned state. An ulterior motive was probably to head off Eastern Bloc support for Kenneth Koma and the B.N.F. The Botswana missions in London, Lusaka and Washington/New York were given the task of building up bilateral relations with a wide range of countries in Europe, Africa and North America. Seretse's main concern in 1969 was building up connections with international organizations. He began the year with his first appearance at a Commonwealth heads of government meeting (CHOGM) in London in January 1969, at which he was welcomed as an old friend by many delegates. At a reception given in the Royal Commonwealth Society building, Seretse was at the centre of the party while Leabua Jonathan of Lesotho stood at the edge, socially ostracized for being too friendly with South Africa. Seretse's speech at the conference emphasized that Rhodesia was not simply a British problem but one for the Commonwealth as a whole. He warned that the problem would not go away but would get worse, and that 'Botswana's survival as an independent state, as a pocket of non-racial democracy within an area of racial hatred and tension, is at stake.'4 As well as hospital consultations and seeing the socialist Benn family in London, Seretse and Ruth were entertained by the princes of capital. They were dined at the Savoy Hotel by the chairman of the Roan Selection Trust, Sir Ronald Prain; and were taken along to see the diamond sorting operations of the De Beers' Central Selling Organisation. They then flew back to Lusaka, and on an R.S.T. jet from Lusaka to Gaborone. Meanwhile Masire was touring Scandinavia and West
Germany in search of further 'Shashe complex' capital, returning via the O.A.U.'s tenth anniversary celebrations in Addis Ababa. Masire, in typical Botswana fashion, arrived at Addis in the economy class of a Lufthansa flight. When the plane landed all the passengers were kept in their seats while Emperor Haile Selassie appeared on the tarmac and a red carpet was rolled out to the first class steps. Trumpets sounded and bands played but no one walked down the red carpet, and the emperor went home. Later Masire was recognized by an immigration officer as the man whom the emperor had come to greet. He was obliged to go back to the plane and emerge down the first class steps onto the red carpet, with the trumpets sounding and the bands playing - though this time there was no emperor.

Seretse himself went in search of finance from the World Bank in Washington in March 1969, to get express approval for the overall design of the 'Shashe complex. He was also accompanying his new ambassador to the U.S.A., Kgosi Linchwe. Together they met President Richard Nixon and Nixon's Secretary of State William Rogers, as well as attending the funeral of former President Eisenhower.

The appointment of Linchwe removed from Botswana one 'tribal' problem for Seretse, but the appointment of Richard Mannothoko as High Commissioner to London almost created another one. Mannothoko had matured from the young bureaucrat whose political volatility had so worried the colonial authorities at Mahalapye ten years earlier. He had been a very successful High Commissioner in Lusaka and roving ambassador in Africa, being Botswana's representative at O.A.U. headquarters in Addis Ababa at the same time. His transfer to London was announced in December and was meant to take effect in April 1969. A week or so before his departure 276

his friends held a party for him in Gaborone. Seretse was invited. At the party someone made an unwise remark to the effect that Mannothoko was going to London to represent the Bakalanga as much as Botswana. This made Seretse see red, as he looked around and realized that he was the only non-Mokalanga present. He left the party in protest and proceeded to cancel Mannothoko's posting, sending Bias Mookodi to London instead. One is reminded of Seretse's reaction to the Bakalanga takeover of the Motherwell football team in Serowe some 25 years earlier. There was no suggestion that Mannothoko himself was to blame, and the matter was kept very quiet by all concerned. Mannothoko was instead made Permanent Secretary for Local Government, the prime position for keeping the chiefs in line and countering 'tribalism'. But news of the debacle eventually leaked. Shortly before the October 1969 elections the Bulawayo Chronicle, one of the foreign newspapers circulating in Botswana, ran an eccentric story about the Bakalanga mafia preparing to seize power. It was implied that Miss Chiepe kept guns under her bed. By this time the issue had blown over, and Seretse anyway regarded Gaositwe Chiepe as 'one of us'. She was subsequently sent to London as High Commissioner in February 1970. No doubt Seretse felt he had made his point, but
he seems to have retained a healthy suspicion of ambitious young Bakalanga beginning to predominate in the ranks of new civil servants - seeing them as too devious and clannish for their own good.\textsuperscript{51}

The political agenda was getting more crowded with domestic and foreign issues as elections loomed on the horizon. The B.N.F. failed to pick up significantly on Bakalanga grievances but it succeeded in recruiting the most prominent of the chiefs, Kgosi Bathoen of the Bangwaketse - Masire's own people. The B.N.F. threatened to make serious inroads into the ranks of traditional leaders at ward and village level throughout the country - the soft underbelly of the ruling B.D.P.'s political support. This undoubtedly exercised Seretse's mind.

The B.D.P. annual conference in May 1966 had tried to reassure the chiefs that 'chieftainship has been, and will continue to be, a vital element in the administrative machinery of the country, and we dismiss as an absolute nonsense the allegation that the Government or the Bechuanaland Democratic Party wants to destroy chieftainship.' But legislation since then had undermined such reassurances.

Kgosi Bathoen in particular was aggravated by the loss of chiefly powers to elected district councils and 'village development committees'. Particularly galling were the Matimela Act which took away the chief's claim to ownership of lost and stray cattle, and the Tribal Land Bill being debated in July 1968, which would invest former chiefly powers of land allocation in Tribal Land Boards dominated by district councillors. Bathoen fully concurred with the opposition critique that communal resources were being grabbed by 'the agents of capitalism' in the form of supporters of the ruling party.\textsuperscript{52}

Kenneth Koma's contacts with Bathoen grew apace after their meeting in June 1968. At the late November 1968 meeting of the House of Chiefs, Seretse repeated his warning of the previous March that members should do their jobs or get out. He described 'traditional institutions' as 'nonpolitical' and told the chiefs that, while there was 'no express prohibition on the chiefs to take part in politics in our laws, Government takes the view that any chief or traditional authority who wants to engage in politics must first resign his chiefly office.' The government then announced its intention to codify traditional laws into the form of written statutes - of ambiguous benefit to the chiefs - and introduced to the House of Chiefs the young anthropologist who was going to do so. Seretse also announced that in future people should plough and harvest when they thought best, ignoring the kgosi's traditional right to put the first plough to the ground and to bite the first pumpkin of the harvest.\textsuperscript{53}

Seretse named Bathoen in his address to the House of Chiefs. Three chiefs had given money to the B.N.F. legal defence fund - Bathoen, Linchwe and Neale Sechele. Kgosi Neale was a nonentity and could be ignored. Kgosi Linchwe was a problem but Seretse recognized that his resistance to the B.D.P. government was as much cultural as political. Linchwe saw his first loyalty as being to his own people, the Bakgatla, rather than to the new nation of Botswana. He was younger than Seretse, progressive in his political sympathies, and stood in relation to...
Bathoen much like Moshoeshoe to Leabua Jonathan in Lesotho. Seretse sensed that Linchwe was frustrated by always being tied down to local chieftainship, and might be won over to national loyalty with a prestigious position. Hence Linchwe was offered the position of next ambassador to the U.S. - which was being separated from the ambassadorship to the United Nations in New York. Linchwe gladly accepted in December 1968, and the B.D.P. was relieved of his lively political presence for a period.

Kgosi Bathoen was Seretse's great problem. He was the 'uncle' who had lectured him about the error of his ways in the 1940s, the moral successor to Tshekedi Khama and the 'father' of the House of Chiefs. Kenneth Koma had sought out an alliance with Bathoen in accordance with the philosophy outlined in the B.N.F.'s Pamphlet No.1 - that the Front would not hesitate 'to make a temporary alliance with the chiefs to oppose neo-colonialism and the compromises of the petty bourgeoisie.' Bathoen's support might also deliver to the B.N.F. its first parliamentary constituencies in the coming 1969-70 elections. It did not seem to worry Koma much that Kgosi Bathoen had a relationship of mutual admiration with South Africa's ruling National Party, whose favourite candidate he was for political power in a Bantustanized Botswana.

Matters came to a head after the 1969 annual conference of the B.D. P. which had been arranged for the first weekend in April. It was customary for the conference to be addressed by the senior local dignitary. Kgosi Bathoen accepted the invitation to do so. Bathoen's speech was long and dreary, but during the course of it he launched himself into furious asides against the constitution which clearly identified him with the B.N.E. The constitution was all a British strategem to retain expatriate power after independence; Gaborone was a city for expatriates, and all the real Basarwa had been relegated to the squatter settlement of Naledi.

Masire was left aghast at such canards: Bathoen had been part of constitutional negotiations from start to end and should know better. Unable to contain himself any longer, Masire shouted out 'That is not true!' For the first time in public after 41 years of power, in his own town and by one of his own traditional subjects, Bathoen had been told to his face that he was a liar. Seretse himself countered with a speech promising 'more and more liberal measures' in tribal administration, and adding that his government 'will not countenance a feudal system in the twentieth century.'

Bathoen boiled over and is said to have indicated both his membership of the B.N.F. and his willingness to resign from the chieftainship to enter politics as a parliamentarian. July 1st was agreed as the resignation date. When Seretse arrived in the Kanye kgotla on June 16th to formally admonish Bathoen against 'open disloyalty', Bathoen pipped him to the post by dramatically resigning on the spot with immediate effect and announcing his candidature for a local parliamentary constituency.

Seretse had been out-maneuvered by Bathoen. However ridiculous the 'unholy alliance of Tribalists, feudalists and would-be Marxists' might appear, the alliance between right and left against the petty bourgeois middle had profound
implications for the election campaign. Kgosi Bathoen became plain Mr. Bathoen Gaseitsiwe and registered himself as B.N.F parliamentary candidate at Kanye to stand against Quett Masire himself. Mr Gaseitsiwe also proceeded Banda-like to praise the example of the white regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa in a cheerful interview with a South African newspaper. Bathoen Gaseitsiwe's appeal to the traditional loyalties of his subjects was to prove considerably more effective in recruiting voters than the sophistications of Kenneth Koma attacking the 'African bureaucratic bourgeoisie' who maintained colonial exploitation. Could Seretse have handled Bathoen differently? Seretse does not seem to have considered buying off Bathoen with some national office like Linchwe. Peter Fawcus feels that there was some deep-seated pride and jealousy on Seretse's part. It was around this time that Seretse made a significant remark to Dr Merriweather: 'Bathoen thinks that I am [still] his child.'

The Botswana National Front now posed a formidable challenge to the ruling Botswana Democratic Party. The legitimacy of Seretse's presidency and B.D.P. rule in the eyes of the people of Botswana could no longer be solely based on the mystique of hereditary rule and traditional status. Seretse and the B.D.P. had turned round and bitten at their 'feudal' roots and had not appealed to the urban proletariat. The basis of popular support for the B.D.P. in future had to be the successful distribution of increased resources generated by economic development. By 1969 this was only obvious in Gaborone, but there had also been some 'trickle down' to ordinary villagers from the employment of family members in government service and new private businesses. Rural people were no longer seen in the rags they had worn during the drought of the early 1960s. But better than that was yet to come.

Seretse began a tight schedule of speeches for October 1969 elections with a speech in the Gaborone stadium on June 14th. He pledged his government to rural development and urban wage constraint, so as not 'to divide our people into privileged town dwellers and toiling farmers.' Attacking 'tribalism' and racism, Seretse defined a Motswana as any person 'who fully accepts and himself applies our ideals of non-racialism and democracy.' He added: 'This is independent Botswana, not a Tswanastan ... Our nation is defined by its common ideals and not by narrow ethnic criteria.'

Seretse went back to Johannesburg General Hospital on June 17th for an overnight check-up. On the same day Botswana announced that the leading right-wing (verkrampte) white South African politician Ras Beyers, who owned a fahn in Botswana's Tuli Block, had been declared a prohibited immigrant. He had made a provocative speech a few days earlier attacking 'Kaffirs, Jode, Koelies & Engelse' (translatable as 'Niggers, Jews, Wogs & English'). On the 23rd, Seretse was quoted regretting the outcome of a Rhodesian white referendum setting out a 'suicide path'. On the 26th, Seretse went to Serowe to ask the Central District council to donate to the state any land necessary for mining infrastructure. He told them that Botswana was 'at a turning point in our national history, which will appear in the future no less momentous than the preservation of our national
boundaries by my grandfather Khama, [or] of the granting of independence in 1966.17
Seretse and Ruth usually flew with their children to Serowe at weekends to relax in the house they had built on the hill. On one such weekend Bathoen came to town to campaign for the B.N.F. Seretse did not see him but met his cousin Sekgoma on the Sunday and enquired after the health of 'uncle' On that same morning, July 6th, came news of the assassination of the Kenyan politician Tom Mboya the previous day. Seretse took the news philosophically enough. Ruth was less equivocal when the irrepressible ten-year old twins burst into the quiet sitting room and rattled off toy machine-guns at their father.58
A five-day speaking tour of the Bokalaka area of northern Central District in July gave Seretse a chance to try out the reception for four 'national principles' which had been hatched between the B.D.P. and the Office of the President - Democracy, Development, Self-Reliance and National Unity. Syson had begun to make his mark in developing the sort of philosophical platform considered necessary by African leaders such as Nyerere and Kaunda. The stuff of Seretse's speeches improved with the assistance of Syson's speech-writing, and gave Seretse the chance to be more relaxed and candid in delivery. 'If I spent all my time reading files, talking with officials and receiving visitors from other countries, I should lose touch with the people of Botswana ... ' he told people in Bokalaka.59
In addition to further speaking tours, August saw Seretse and his team in the Office of the President working on a series of very important speeches which would open up Botswana's image internationally. Seretse had been personally flattered, in July, by international recognition in the form of his old college at Oxford, Balliol, electing him as an honorary fellow. Now, emboldened by a messenger from the Nigerian head of state General Gowon, he ventured out at the beginning of September to face his first O.A.U. summit meeting in Addis Ababa - where he impressed other delegations with long, detailed and well-reasoned speeches. He returned home to file his nomination as President for the forthcoming elections.
Later in the month, Seretse proceeded to Francistown to announce to a very large crowd that the government had bought out the slum areas of the town from the Tati Company - so that roads, water and sewerage could be improved to acceptable standards.60 This was a blatant piece of electioneering by the B.D.P. in the heartland of Matante's B.P.P. Matante had made exposure of the iniquities of the Tati Company, which had the monopoly of land ownership around Francistown, into his life's work. The government had been unwilling to do anything that smacked of nationalization for fear of scaring away the multinational capital that Botswana was beginning to attract.
Seretse then flew to New York to deliver a speech to the American Council on Foreign Relations on September 22nd, followed by one to the United Nations on September 24th. He also took time out to visit the State Department in Washington, the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation and the African-
American Institute. To the U.N. Seretse delivered one of his best speeches, laying out Botswana's difficult position in southern Africa, appealing for understanding of Botswana's need to co-exist with South Africa, and asserting that Botswana would not compromise on its principles of non-racialism and democracy. The words best remembered today were also the kernel of what he had to say:

Botswana as a thriving majority-rulled state, on the borders of South Africa and Namibia, will present an effective and serious challenge to the credibility of South Africa's racial policies and in particular its policy of developing so-called Bantu homelands and its stated goal of eventual independence for these Bantustans ... A prosperous nonracial democracy in Botswana ... will add to the problems South Africa is already facing in reconciling its irrational racial policies with its desire for economic growth.

He ended the speech with an appeal:

Botswana needs the support and sympathy of friendly nations. We recognise that our independence ultimately depends on the durability of our political institutions and our success in achieving economic development. But our independence is also buttressed by our external relations. We have friends in all continents.

The speech received a standing ovation at the U.N. from all but two delegates - those of Portugal and South Africa. A couple of weeks later the speech was read into the U.S. congressional record by a senator and a congressman. Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts, himself an African-American who had visited the country, argued that 'Botswana, in some ways more than any other nation, occupies a key position in the fight for human rights'

Chapter 12

STATESMAN

1969-74

Two days after his momentous speech to the United Nations, Seretse was back in Gaborone to read out the B.D.P.'s election manifesto on radio. The manifesto elaborated on the four 'principles' or 'pillars' of National Democracy: government of the people by the people (puso ya batho ka batho), development (ditiro tsa dithabololo), self-reliance (boipelego), and national unity (popagano). They were summed up in the Setswana word Kagisano, translatable as harmony and well-being, 'which will guide our National Development over the next five years.'

Seretse then went on a breakneck tour of the populated eastern half of the country, speaking at 26 different places in the two weeks left before the elections. The image that Seretse projected was as the leader of a poor but honest country, pulling itself up by its bootstraps and determined to uphold democracy and the rule of law in a region dominated by oppressive minority regimes. Seretse was well suited to the task of projecting this image. He had had the reputation of standing up to bullies and sticking to principles ever since his school-days. It was
an image that was calculated to impress both the electorate at home and the corporations that might provide finance for the 'Shashe complex'
Seretse's new image later had an unexpected side effect in South Africa. The black South African magazine Drum came out in strong support of Seretse Khama and acclaimed Botswana as 'a lesson in tolerance and good behaviour to other countries. A public opinion survey reported in the Rand Daily Mail in April 1971 said that more black South Africans accepted Seretse Khama as 'their leader' than accepted either Banda or Buthelezi, though they admired Kaunda and Mandela more.2

The general election on October 18th, 1969, resulted once again in a B.D.P. majority, but its share of the vote dropped by 12 per cent to 69 per cent. The opposition B.P.P. had retained its three seats: two around Francistown and one in Mochudi. The real upset for the ruling party was its loss of four other seats - to two other opposition parties. Motsamai Mpho of the B. I.P had been elected as the member for his home constituency of Okavango in the north-west. Bathoen Gaseisitswe and two of his henchmen in the B.N.F. had taken all three seats in the Bangwaketse district in the southeast. Bathoen had kicked out Vice-President Masire from Kanye South. Seven out of 31 elected parliamentary seats were now occupied by three opposition parties, and parliament was to become a livelier place.
Seretse got Masire back into parliament through the provision in the constitution for the government to nominate four extra members of parliament. This provision had originally been intended to allow for appointment to the legislature of representatives of communities otherwise unrepresented. A similar provision existed in district councils which were elected at the same time as parliament. But the provision was now blatantly used for getting representatives of the governing party into parliament and into the district councils in Kanye and Francistown.3 Once back in parliament Masire was re-appointed Vice-President, but thereafter had to ensure constant opposition taunts that he was 'not the people's choice' for so high an office.

The 'feudal' and 'socialist' wings of the B.N.F. coexisted uneasily. The party's founder and ideologue Kenneth Koma had not come close to defeating the sitting M.P. for the B.D.P. at Mahalapye, who was his own brother Gaolese Koma. Kenneth Koma retained the party vice-presidency under Bathoen as party president, and continued to run the party newspaper, Puo Phaa, and to write policy documents. Bathoen Gaseitsiwe, even in the company of radicals, behaved like a chief and controlled the party on an everyday basis. He felt no embarrassment in making public statements which contradicted party policy, such as coming out in support of South Africa's so-called Immorality Act - which would have made President Khama a criminal in his own country for having a non-black wife. His maiden speech in parliament in November 1969 expressed his opinion on Rhodesia: 'We had better keep quiet and say nothing.' It also emerged that Bathoen had suppressed parts of the 1969 B.N.F. election manifesto that might have offended South Africa or Rhodesia.
With the emergence of the B.N.F from the shadows of extra-parliamentary activity Botswana could now operate as a truly 'open society' where a broad range of opinions could be expressed and exchanged. The government's central intelligence summary for May 1970 reported that the month was 'once again extremely quiet and free from incidents of major importance or significance, and the general situation throughout Botswana remained unchanged and satisfactory.' Infiltration of 'alien militants' from the north had been diverted by 'internal dissension' among 'freedom fighter groups' in Zambia. The importation of 'Sino-Soviet propaganda literature' to B.I.P. and B.N.F. leaders continued unabated but was no longer considered a problem. The only hint of disquiet was among civil servants over delays in a salaries commission.5

Complex negotiations for a financial package for the 'Shashe complex' proceeded apace, overseen by Masire. A World Bank loan of $2.5 million for preliminary design work was announced in December 1969. A Canadian loan of R13 million announced in May 1970 was 'the largest development assistance project ever undertaken by Canada in Africa.' But the soliciting of Scandinavian finance was proving to be problematic because of South African factors. Though Botswana had decided to generate electrical power from local coal rather than importing it from South Africa, South Africa's Anglo American Corporation was becoming increasingly involved in what had begun as a project solely of the Zambia-based Roan Selection Trust.6

The year 1970 saw two minor crises in foreign policy which gave Seretse the chance to cut his diplomatic teeth. The first concerned Lesotho where, in January 1970, Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan interrupted the count in his country's elections at the point when the seats won by the opposition began to overtake those of the government. He declared a state of emergency and invalidated the whole election process, ending a radio press conference on Saturday, January 31st with the words: 'Yes, I've seized power. And I'm not ashamed of it.' The Lesotho opposition appealed to Britain, the old colonial power, which declined to help but passed news of the coup onto other Commonwealth countries - including Botswana. In London the Financial imes commented on the 'Trouble in South Africa's enclave': 'It is customary for most whites in South Africa to welcome with relish any such political upheaval in the independent African countries and to use each example in support of their argument that black Africans are unready and unequipped to operate a democratic system.'7 This was the sort of comment which drove Seretse and his Cabinet in Botswana to take action. The Cabinet held an emergency meeting to consider the Lesotho crisis on Monday, February 2nd. It decided that no good would come of too public a stand on the issue - a pattern of response that Seretse and his colleagues would take on many, perhaps too many, fraught issues. The formula to be adopted with the press and others was to be carefully evasive: 'the Botswana Government is following the situation in Lesotho closely and with concern.' The Cabinet was concerned about the prospect of continued civil strife in Lesotho and its effects on the safety
of the Batswana students at the joint university located in Roma in Lesotho, while Seretse was also worried about his friends King Moshoeshoe II and Queen Mamohato.

Above all, Seretse saw the need to 'build a barrier against further South African influence' which he saw lurking behind Leabua's coup. In Seretse's eyes Lesotho could only 'retain a measure of independence [from] South Africa' if some attempt was made to reunite 'a deeply divided country.' Seretse's underlying fear was that internal strife in Lesotho would give South Africa the pretext for political or military interference, which it might then use as a precedent to do likewise in Botswana and elsewhere.

Leabua Jonathan strongly defended his actions on February 3rd, feeding the press with South Africa's line that Western democratic institutions were unsuitable for Africans. But he also intimated that he was willing to open up investigation of the supposed election fraud to impartial investigators.

Seretse seized at this straw. He set about getting diplomatic support from African Commonwealth countries for a Commonwealth initiative involving the Commonwealth secretary-general, Arnold Smith of Canada, as mediator. Seretse first contacted Kaunda by diplomatic signal and by private letter dispatched on February 5th, telling him of his desire to 'preserve Lesotho from total dependency on South Africa.'

Armed with a positive response from Kaunda, Seretse's permanent secretary Archie Mogwe was sent in a hired aircraft to Maseru to deliver a personal message from Seretse to Leabua. The mediation plan involving Arnold Smith was set out in the letter. Mogwe was allowed to deliver the message, but was otherwise given the cold shoulder in Maseru by tightlipped officials - some of whom he had previously thought of as personal friends. He was left kicking his heels in his hotel awaiting a reply. Leabua's resolve was probably strengthened by President Banda of Malawi, who had staged his own 'constitutional coup' against his Cabinet some years earlier, and by King Sobhuza of Swaziland who was to take the same action against his parliamentary opposition two years later. Banda came down strongly against Seretse's initiative, arguing that Arnold Smith was 'unqualified to intervene in political matters' This must have given a crumb of comfort to Leabua, who continued to be in no rush to answer Seretse.

Mogwe had been given instructions not to return to Botswana without a reply, but he came under pressure from the pilot of the hired aircraft to leave Lesotho. The pilot had been 'got at' by sources unknown, probably South African, with the idea that there might be a bomb attack on the plane on the tarmac at Maseru airport. Mogwe was obliged to fly back to Gaborone without a response having been given.

Seretse's initiative on Lesotho was finally killed by Nigeria, the biggest Commonwealth state in Africa, which like other West African countries had by now had its own string of coups d'etat. Leabua Jonathan was delighted. On February 12th he publicly thanked Dr Banda of Malawi for his support of the principle of 'non-interference'. The British government, under Prime Minister
Harold Wilson, had supported Seretse’s initiative by making their signalling facilities in Gaborone fully available and in supplying intelligence about reactions elsewhere in Africa. But Britain now made the extraordinary suggestion that Botswana should seek the help of South Africa to exert pressure on Lesotho to return to constitutionality. This Seretse flatly refused to do. He informed the British High Commissioner in Gaborone that the coldness which existed between Gaborone and Pretoria made such a suggestion both inappropriate and unrealistic. Britain then decided to concede recognition of Leabua’s constitutional coup in Lesotho, giving as its reason: ‘It is not in our interests to force Lesotho into total dependence on South Africa.’ But Britain did suspend new aid to Lesotho, bringing angry condemnation from Leabua and making him turn to South Africa for aid. Britain eventually restored aid to Lesotho in June 1970, because of famine conditions in that country.8 Seretse’s attempt to get the Commonwealth secretariat involved had faltered by the time Leabua sent Seretse a reply on February 20th - telling him politely to mind his own business. By then civil insurrection had already erupted in Lesotho.

Seretse did not give up hope. In early March 1970 he asked Motsamai Mpho to withdraw a parliamentary motion for debate on the situation in Lesotho as he was still engaged in behind-the-scenes activities which were too delicate for a public airing. Mpho was concerned about the fate of the Lesotho opposition but readily gave way in the circumstances. No hint was therefore given by the Botswana government to either parliament or press of what was going on with regard to Lesotho.

The failure of Botswana’s first major venture in international diplomacy went unpublicized. Lesotho went on to convene the first and last meeting of South Africa’s ‘dialogue club’ - consisting of representatives of the Ivory Coast (club founder), Malawi, Uganda, Ghana, Madagascar and Lesotho. They met at Maseru in October 1970, but South Africa’s arrogant insensitivity to this gesture provoked Lesotho’s Leabua Jonathan to immediate anger and reduced the Ivory Coast delegates to embarrassment.9 Seretse had no time to mourn his failure over Lesotho as an even more contentious issue pressed in. On February 20th, 1970, the South African government had sent the Botswana government a diplomatic note suggesting that no common border existed between Botswana and Zambia at Kazungula. The implications were profound. Seretse and Kaunda had made great play of the tiny but extremely significant common border between their countries in the middle of the Zambezi at its confluence with the Chobe. A ferry service had been carrying ox-wagons and passengers between the Botswana and Zambia banks of the river for a hundred years or more. Kazungula itself was named after the great mzungula 'sausage-tree' on the Botswana slipway down to the ferry. In 1968 Seretse and Kaunda had agreed to improve the ferry service and to build roads for heavy traffic linking Livingston in Zambia with Nata and Francistown in Botswana over the 'freedom ferry' at Kazungula. In 1969 the U.S., anxious to counter the TanZam 'freedom' railroad being built by the People's Republic of China, had
taken up the BotZam 'freedom' highway as a possible U.S. Aid project of great symbolic value.

South Africa's curiously worded note to Botswana of February 20th, quoting a Bechuanaland Protectorate official some years earlier in its support, contended Botswana and Zambia had no common border because the thalweg (deepest channel) of the Chobe River, met the mid-point of the Zambezi River at a point further downstream than Kazungula. Any ferry or bridge must therefore always violate South (West) African or Rhodesian territory. The reception of the note caused quite a stir among officials in the Office of the President. Some of them counselled that the issue should be settled by arbitration. Seretse's response was firm. He said that arbitration was 'out of the question.' He was not prepared to accept that South Africa had any locus standi at all to be involved in the matter, as it was occupying South West Africa illegally. Nor was he prepared to negotiate with the illegal government of rebel Rhodesia. (Such resolution was strengthened by incursions of Rhodesian troops onto Botswana soil at Kazungula on February 2nd and April 12th.) South Africa's challenge to Botswana was not merely a 'technical' issue of where exactly the borders ran: it was a political issue of profound significance. South Africa was attempting to block communications between Zambia and Botswana.

The governments of Zambia, the U.S. and Britain were informed about the note and its contents. Seretse and Kaunda were in any case due for one of their regular meetings, to be held in Seshke not far from Kazungula on Monday, April 13th, 1969. By this time the news had been made public by Colin Legum in the London Sunday Observer newspaper under the headline 'South Africa blocks US Road Plan'. The suggestion that South Africa was trying to block the great U.S.A., rather than just little Botswana, was a sharp tactical move. Legum was a personal friend of Seretse's.

Despite the seriousness of the occasion, Seretse and Kaunda managed to take time off in Seshke to address local villagers who had come to see their two illustrious visitors. Kaunda was amused to find that Seretse could communicate much better with these Zambians than he could, because of the similarity between Setswana and their Silozi language.

This started an exchange of jovial insults between Seretse and Kaunda. Seretse told Kaunda that in Setswana a person from the north was a 'Mokwerekwere', meaning a barbarian. Kaunda retorted that the Zambian Silozi language was more highly developed than the Botswana one, and began to refer to Seretse as 'the primitive man from Botswana' The joke may have been lost on the Seshke villagers, but 'Primitive Man' was to remain one of Kaunda's favourite nicknames for Seretse in subsequent years.

International press comment on the Kazungula issue worked very much in Botswana's favour. The Times and the Africa Bureau in London said it threw all of South Africa's outward policy into doubt as the 'good neighbour turns out to be a Verkrampte boss.' The Observer's foreign news service suggested that the actions of the South African government could rebound against it by putting into
doubt its rights over the Caprivi Strip and South West Africa in general: 'So the repercussions of what might have appeared to Pretoria to be a minor squabble when they first determined to challenge the international highway, could yet turn out to be a major blunder.'

On April 23rd news came that lawyers of the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, after consulting the records of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, confirmed that the Kazungula ferry's right-of-way dated from at least 90 years previously, before the borders in question were even conceived of. Other authorities opined that the exact meeting point of the four borders in the deep waters of the Chobe-Zambezi confluence was strictly speaking indefinable, as there was no record of where the thalweg (deepest channel) of the Chobe river had been in 1890.12

The Office of the President decided to go ahead with the road and ferry project and let the diplomatic row blow over by itself. It was generally supposed that the issue had been raised by the ruling National Party in South Africa for electoral purposes - to appeal to verkrampte voters who might otherwise vote for Albert Hertzog's breakaway Herstigte National Party. Informed observers could also point out that South Africa itself had been pressing for the construction of just such a road for a decade or more, so that its troop bases in the Caprivi Strip could be supplied direct from the Transvaal across Botswana rather than along a route five or six times longer via South West Africa. 13

South Africa's (permanent) secretary for external affairs, Brand Fourie, came to see Seretse a few days after the elections, on May 13th, to clear the air. Seretse told Kaunda in a letter two weeks later that he had found Fourie stiff and unbending, sticking very closely to a ministerial brief even though he had been happy enough to blame 'the fuss about the road in the South African press' on the Herstigte National Party. Seretse told Kaunda 'we did not discuss the boundary, since we have not yet replied to the South African note - [but] he did raise the matter of the road.' Fourie said that while South Africa appreciated the economic importance of the planned road for Botswana and understood that it would be wholly in Botswana territory, he must raise questions of security about the road bringing 'terrorists' southwards. Seretse drily pointed out that they were not known for their willingness to walk down public highways. '4

Seretse suspected that the South Africans had leaked the note to Washington even before he had asked for U.S. assistance. On May 19th the U.S. representative in Gaborone requested an audience with the President. He confirmed that the U.S. government was now determined to build the road regardless of the views of the South African government. South Africa's objections had made the U.S.A. all the more resolved to go ahead with financing the project. Seretse was home and dry. The New York Times announced the U.S. decision on June 1st, and arrangements were put in hand for a U.S. technical evaluation team to arrive and inspect the projected route on August 30th.

Meanwhile Bathoen Gaseitsiwe, the parliamentary leader of the B.N.F., attacked the Zambian road project and called instead for a new railway link.
across the Kalahari (through his district) to South West Africa. He followed this up a year later with a visit to that country, South Africa's 'fifth province, during which he praised the system of Bantustans for preserving the rights of chieftainship. I5

By September 1970 South Africa had conceded that the Kazungula ferry had had an established right-of-way for at least 'a decade; adding that South Africa would also benefit from such a road. '6 But Seretse continued to delay a formal reply to the South African diplomatic note of February 20th, 1970, in order to underline its irrelevance. Numerous drafts of a form of words were made in the Office of the President but Seretse did not much like any of them. It was not until March 8th, 1971, that a simple formula was found: 'Botswana is unable to accept the views and contents of the documents and their implications. The Government of Botswana does not propose for the present, however, to pursue this matter further.' The unpublicized compromise with South Africa was that the Francistown-Kazungula road would have a spur to Ngoma Bridge on the Chobe, so that trucks could carry non-military supplies from the Transvaal along the road to South African bases in the Caprivi Strip.

The 'four-way border' question was thus successfully resolved, or at least placed in cold storage until the 1990s. It showed that a small country could succeed in diplomacy with a few influential friends and a favourable international press. The lesson of not taking too public a stand on contentious issues was also not lost on Seretse - though he seemed to be apologizing for this in December 1970 when he acknowledged to parliamentarians that foreign affairs were 'too infrequently drawn to the attention of this House' despite being given so much time in Cabinet. '7 Foreign affairs continued in effect to be a closed presidential prerogative until 1974 when Archie Mogwe became foreign minister answerable in parliament.

As for the Kazungula road, negotiations with the U.S. now proceeded slowly, with an American road contractor being signed up in mid-1973 for completion by 1976-77 of what was to be only a gravel road.'8

Seretse assured Kaunda on June 25th, 1970, that 'despite the limitations we face, [Botswana] can complement Zambia and other African efforts to prevent further reverses in southern Africa.' This assurance was put to the test when the new British prime minister, Edward Heath, formally announced in July 1970 the willingness of his government to allow British manufacturers to sell weapons to South Africa. At the time Kaunda was being rushed off his feet in preparations at short notice for the Non-Aligned Movement summit conference of heads of government from all over the world to be held in Lusaka in September 1970. Heath's announcement fell straight into Kaunda's lap as an issue for coordinated protest.

When Seretse's turn came to speak at the N.A.M. conference he received a particularly sympathetic audience and impressed the delegates with a coolheaded
speech. On the one hand he associated Botswana closely with Zambia's position, warning Britain and France against promoting an arms race in southern Africa or the Indian Ocean. On the other hand he added: 'If we appear reluctant to play an active and prominent role in the struggle for the establishment of majority rule throughout southern Africa ... it is because we are concerned about our particularly exposed position.' Characteristically Seretse appealed for more bilateral cooperation between governments and less reliance on centralized bureaucracy in Third World movements, and also included a sideswipe against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia two years earlier. (Despite this, Botswana opened up diplomatic relations with both Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union in 1970.)

Commonwealth African leaders decided to make British arms sales to South Africa a major issue at the Commonwealth heads of government meeting to be held in Singapore in January 1971. There was even talk of expelling Britain from the Commonwealth, or of African states withdrawing from the Commonwealth, over the issue of arms for South Africa. Certainly the Commonwealth looked likely to be damaged irreparably.

The issue of arms sales grew steadily more heated in September and October 1970. Heath and his foreign minister, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, fretted about the vocal opposition of Presidents Kaunda and Nyerere and refused to meet an Organisation of African Unity delegation. Heath's patience finally broke when it became clear that France had moved while Britain dallied, to take up lucrative contracts for arms offered by South Africa. What seems to have really piqued Heath was that France's African ex-colonies in the 'French Community' offered not a peep of protest, while Britain's ex-colonies in the Commonwealth were being so vocal in criticism of their founding member. Britain might now leave the Commonwealth voluntarily.

In Gaborone, Seretse viewed these developments with concern. He may have seriously considered ducking the whole arms issue at the Singapore conference as Botswana was still so behoven to Britain for aid. Botswana needed an annual British grant-in-aid for at least one more year to enable it to cover internal administrative costs. It also needed British help to get access for its beef to the European Economic Community which Britain was about to join. Probably with the encouragement of Premier Pierre Trudeau of Canada, Seretse began to edge himself forward as an honest broker between the African presidents and the British Prime Minister.

No African president can have been as appreciative as Seretse of the virtues of the Commonwealth and of links with Britain. Seretse had no time for Heath's vision of ideological conformity along French Community lines. He wanted the Commonwealth to remain viable as a politically diverse group of nations that could exchange ideas in an easy and relaxed manner, because they shared similar preconceptions of law and administration as well as language. Above all Seretse wanted the Commonwealth to act together to solve the problem of Rhodesia, rather than to split itself open on the rocks of the arms sales controversy. An open split would leave Botswana even more exposed without
international support to face its powerful white racist neighbours. Britain might entirely wash its hands of Rhodesia by recognizing its independence, instead of pursuing its responsibility to achieve majority democratic rule there. It was up to the Commonwealth to remind Britain of that responsibility, and the Commonwealth therefore had to survive with Britain inside it.

At the end of October 1970, Seretse wrote to Kaunda urging that the Third World members of the Commonwealth should not 'play into Heath's hands and allow him to blame the destruction of the Commonwealth on the new members.' During December 1970 Seretse then visited Heath in London and suggested that Britain might postpone a final decision on the sale of arms to South Africa until after the Commonwealth conference in Singapore. He also suggested that a British and U.S. initiative on the security of the Indian Ocean would be much more acceptable than collaboration between Britain and South Africa to police the Indian Ocean - as the arms deal seemed to imply. Seretse also told Heath that he wanted Botswana now to play a more positive role in southern Africa. He wanted to be free to talk frankly to both South Africa and the countries to the north. But that liberty could be destroyed if African liberation movements were able to force open a military corridor through Botswana, or if Britain and other 'donor countries' did not help Botswana to keep South African business and political interests at bay.

Seretse and the external affairs division in the Office of the President took considerable care over preparations for the Singapore conference. Seretse kept in close contact with both Kaunda in Lusaka and Heath in London, sounding out possibilities for compromise. Together with Syson and Joe Matthews he prepared alternative drafts of actions and speeches to deal with various scenarios of possible discussion in Singapore. This sort of intensive preparation set a pattern that was to be followed throughout the 1980s in the external affairs division of the Office of the President when preparing for meetings with foreign ministers and heads of government.20

The Singapore Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in January 1971 proved deeply divided and full of bitter recriminations. In public sessions, Seretse showed solidarity with other African leaders. In closed private sessions he was more forthcoming, using his personal tact and even-handedness. His wit was used to good effect in the form of quick sharp comments, strategically placed and delivered with a broad smile - to wheedle out compromises and escape routes that would avoid loss of face for all parties.

Seretse emerged from the Singapore conference with greatly enhanced international prestige. He was seen by 'old' Commonwealth countries such as Australia and Canada as a realist who spoke reasonably to both old and new members - steering emotional tirades back towards careful discussion. Pierre Trudeau of Canada and particularly Malcolm Fraser of Australia, who were generally sympathetic to African causes, got on like a house on fire with Seretse. These relationships with Trudeau and Fraser were to be further strengthened at the
Ottawa CHOGM in 1973, when everyone present was to make a greater effort to be pleasant to each other. Seretse also set the style for Botswana's foreign relations in general. Botswana representatives at international meetings were expected to be good humoured, straight talking and unpretentious.

Seretse had explained Botswana’s own ‘outward policy’ to German journalists in August 1970 as one of ‘strengthening and safeguarding our independence by diversifying as much as possible our trade as well as our political relationships’ away from dependence on South Africa. With the problem of raising further finance for the ‘Shashe complex’ in mind, Seretse visited Scandinavia in November 1970 to see if Denmark and Sweden would follow up their previous offers of modest aid to Botswana.

At the Dag Hammarskjold foundation centre in Uppsala, Sweden, he reflected on Botswana's recent history of development, moving from an inheritance of neglect to ‘creating the kind of society which we hope will provide a model for southern Africa ... a viable, united, non-racial democracy.’ Using the sort of social democratic language which would appeal to Scandinavians, he was nevertheless rude about the concept of ‘African Socialism’.

In Copenhagen Seretse spoke of ‘the development of Botswana as a viable non-racial democracy whose unity and independence is based on social and economic justice for its people, regardless of race, colour or tribe ... We are determined to demonstrate that placing irrational and artificial barriers between human beings is not only immoral but wasteful.’

Seretse’s visit to Scandinavia was successful in stimulating official aid for rural development and social services in Botswana, but failed to persuade Scandinavian capital to invest in a country considered too closely tied to the South African economy. In Copenhagen Seretse had acknowledged that Botswana was ‘prepared to accept South African private investment.’ This preparedness was put to the test over the coming year as the Anglo American Corporation effectively took over the interests of American Metal Climax and Roan Selection Trust in the Shashe complex. World Bank and American loans, and Canada’s largest ever loan to Africa, made the Botswana government’s debt ‘probably equivalent’ to the gross national product by mid-1971. The final irony came at the end of 1972 when the Botswana government, for lack of other sources - and because it had decided to generate its own electricity to be independent from South African power - was obliged to top out its financing of the Shashe and SelebiPhikwe infrastructure by negotiating a loan from South Africa’s parastatal Industrial Development Corporation.21

Seretse’s ‘outward policy’ continued in March 1971 with official visits to the major Commonwealth members in West Africa - Nigeria and Ghana. It was Nigeria which from lack of understanding of southern Africa had put paid to Seretse’s diplomatic initiative on Lesotho a year earlier. Seretse was also anxious to recruit skilled West African personnel to leaven the increasing mass of European expatriates working in Botswana. The Nigerian response was enthusiastic: plans were put in hand for a resident high commissioner in
Gaborone, and a leading lawyer and judge was recruited to be Botswana's new chief justice. Botswana, however, declined to follow the lead of Nigeria and Britain, later in 1971, in precipitate recognition of the legitimacy of the military coup in Uganda led by General Idi Amin. Relations with South Africa continued to be distant but correct. Seretse always welcomed the annual visits for consultation of Colin Eglin from the white parliamentary opposition in South Africa, but otherwise it was a matter of 'telephone diplomacy' with the South African government. He continued to be dismissive of 'dialogue', describing it as South Africa's attempt 'to have a number of client states around her so she is secure from attack? It was such South African concerns that led to a rare face-to-face meeting, between Seretse and the South African foreign minister Hilgard Muller in November 1971, to finalize border demarcation so that South Africa could place a ring of steel wire around Botswana. There was also tension over South African police harassment of witnesses from Botswana.22

One of the proudest moments in Seretse's life, according to his widow, was on receiving the news from Masire that Botswana could soon balance its budget from its own revenues - the country no longer had to go with a begging bowl to Britain for a grant-in-aid to cover recurrent expenditure. Botswana had now achieved financial independence as well as political independence, and Seretse felt that he was 'his own man at last'? Seretse announced the news of the balanced budget for 1972-73 when he opened parliament in December 1971.23 Botswana had resisted the temptation to pluck the bud of its burgeoning economy by extravagant expenditure, and the fruits of its labours would now become available for wise investment. Financial self-sufficiency had been made possible largely by customs duties on the import of capital equipment necessary for the Selebi-Phikwe copper and nickel mines, as well as taxation rising with the gross domestic product - which from now and for many years hence grew at an average (in *real* prices) of 12 per cent every year. Income from beef exports was growing at a time of rising world prices - though threatened by the impending entry of the main export market, Britain, into the E.E.C. The coal mine for the Morupule power station would not begin production until 1973, and the copper and nickel mines in Selebi-Phikwe not until 1974. But the diamond mine in Orapa had begun production in July 1971, and would render a share of profits and revenue direct to government coffers in 1972.

Masire's newly recombined Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (M.F.D.P.) had produced the first truly comprehensive national development plan ('N.D.P.-II') in September 1970. The new plan proclaimed social justice, equality of opportunity, and the use of persuasion over compulsion, as its 'objectives' Masire had declared the ruling B.D.P. to be 'a party of the common man' at the party's 1970 annual conference, and Seretse himself had taken to using homely Setswana phrases to extoll the virtues of social concern and self-reliance - adding
that elected councillors, members of parliament and even the president himself were 'your servants, not your masters.' Some cynics called this 'Syson socialism'. In March 1970 the South African newsmagazine News-Check ran an article which suggested that the government of Botswana had been taken over by communists in the Office of the President. John Syson was named because of his wife's leftish family connections. Also named was Z.K. Matthews's son Joe, a former member of the S.A. communist party who had left the A.N.C. in London to join the Office of the President. John and Joe threatened to sue, and the allegations were not repeated in the South African press until both men had left Botswana government service.24

The key to the B.D.P. government's new social and economic policy was wage restraint - keeping down the wages of the small section of the population in paid employment. This had two expressed aims, as put forward by Seretse in July 1971 and expounded in the National Policy on Incomes, Employment, Prices and Profit in 1972. The first aim was to maximize employment through labour-intensive rather than capital-intensive production - so that businesses employed people, rather than buying machines to do work. The second aim was to 'redress existing inequalities between town and country.' Wages would be kept down in the rapidly expanding urbanindustrial areas, so that the nation's new wealth could be redistributed to rural areas through government provision of social services and agricultural assistance. Wage constraint in Botswana was made easier by the fact that there had never been a powerful trade union movement to represent the interests of urban workers. The growth of trade unions had been restrained by preemptive legislation. Seretse lectured the new miners of Selebi-Phikwe in November 1971 against trade unions being 'permitted to become pressure groups for the relatively privileged, concerned only with increasing the pay packets of the fortunate minority in employment.' He also made a significant admission of how the interests of government coincided with those of private capital: 'High wages in the mines reduce profits and hence tax revenues and hence the money [that] Government can spend on development.'

Opening parliament in December 1971, Seretse rounded off his speech with a discourse on the need to 'guard against ... a society rigidly divided between rich and poor" and pledged that his government would always consider first the needs of the majority in all forms of development planning. The Manchester Guardian correspondent Richard Gott, after visiting Botswana, accused Seretse and the ruling B.D.P. of dressing up capitalism in the clothes of socialist rhetoric. But the B.D.P. assiduously avoided ideological commitment to anything but the vague Setswana concept of kagisano (harmony and well-being). When Matante had suggested in parliament during March 1971 that the government believed in socialism, the ruling party's ideologue K.P. Morake had replied that the word had lost precision through overuse and that 'social justice' would be more appropriate.25
Seretse Khama turned 50 years of age on July 1st, 1971. He was recovering from a bout of mid-winter bronchitis, but his basic health was still good and life continued much as before, with plenty to preoccupy him in the Office of the President at one end of State House. Lady Khama was also putting in a full week’s work at the Botswana Red Cross, which had become fully independent from its British Red Cross mother-body early in 1970. She was also putting time into the Botswana Council of Women and into the Botswana Girl Guides, which she headed by virtue of being First Lady.26

At home elsewhere in State House, Seretse and Ruth were enjoying some of the last days when all their children would be together with them as a family in 1971. The twins, Tony and Tsehekedi, had recently started as day pupils at the new private secondary school in Gaborone called Maru-a-Pula, while the older children, Jacqueline and Ian, were almost ready to fly the coop. After ‘A’ level exams at Arundel girls school in Salisbury at the end of 1967, Jacqueline had gone to Belgium to further her education in French. There had been wild rumours, subsequently denied, of her marrying Derek Brink, an Afrikaner Motswana farmer and heir to Botswana’s greatest fortune. In the early 1970s she was courted instead by a young expatriate Netherlander, Johan ter Haar. Ter Haar came to the country in 1970, through Ford Foundation channels, to work as an economic planning officer responsible for promoting small business development.

Meanwhile Seretse's oldest son Ian was finishing boarding school in Bulawayo with seemingly impractical ambitions - for Botswana - of becoming an air force pilot. In September 1971 it was announced that Ian Khama would proceed to officer training at Sandhurst military college in England in May 1972, in preparation for a career in Botswana's paramilitary police force.27

A new friend of Seretse's was surprised to find that the civil service rather than parliament or political parties was his main preoccupation. Localization of the public service had once again been brought to the fore as an issue in the 1969 elections, with the B.N.F. expressing the frustrations of junior Batswana bureaucrats against their senior expatriate overlords. There was an ethnic dimension to the problem in that so many of the up and coming bureaucrats were Bakalanga. The problem also got worse as economic growth opened up the need for new technical posts which could only be filled by new expatriates. Clearly what was needed was a systematic programme of recruitment and training of local citizens, with tangible results by the next election in 1974.

Seretse turned for help to Fawcus's old protegee Bob Edwards of the Ford Foundation in New York and to the Ford Foundation representative in Nairobi, ex-Ghana British administrator David Anderson. The foundation sent out an expert in localization named Frank Glyn, who arrived in Gaborone in February 1970. Glyn worked closely with Seretse and Steenkamp in the Office of the President on staff training plans and reorganization of the public service as a whole. The target date for 'manpower self-sufficiency' was set for 1990, by which time the university should have produced 5 000 graduates. Together with veteran
Motswana bureaucrat Dupleix Pilane, Glyn wrote and presented a report to Seretse in November 1972 which became the blueprint for localization and training in the public service. Glyn himself left the country in 1975, by which time localization was considered by most parties to be proceeding smoothly and successfully.28 Seretse was taken aback in mid-1971 by the vocal opposition of recently recruited young bureaucrats and their student allies about the setting up of a casino-hotel (the Holiday Inn) and a private secondary school (Marua-Pula) in Gaborone. Both were seen as alien institutions inspired by South African ideals and aimed at the corruption of Batswana - one by encouraging prostitution and the other by encouraging elitism. The ringleaders of this agitation were identified as belonging to the Botswana Youth Federation, the youth wing of the B.N.F., and Seretse issued another stern rebuke to civil servants against dabbling in politics. Seretse seems to have been all the more perplexed by support for these views from such august personages as the members of the Botswana Christian Council. He is said to have exclaimed that nothing could be wrong with Southern African Holiday Inns since they were managed by a Balliol man like himself, while Maru-a-Pula was seen as the natural place to send the Khama twins. Seretse and Ruth had been worried about the disdain for mixing with Africans experienced by Ian at boarding school in racist Rhodesia. They wanted their other sons to be well educated in an English private ('public') school environment in non-racial Botswana.29

The early 1970s saw an increasing divergence between the Khama family in Gaborone and relatives who remained in Serowe and Central District. Seretse and Ruth spent more and more weekends in Gaborone, and less time in Serowe. The children wanted to see their friends in Gaborone at weekends rather than fly or drive to Serowe. Gaborone had at last become a town with a heart - with two hotels, a large cinema and Saturday night parties held by people who no longer fled to rural homes every weekend. By the end of 1972 there were six and a half thousand vehicles in town and the original two-storey profile of the central shopping mall was being pushed up to six storeys by an Anglo American Corporation building. The town also boasted more than one housebreaker by 1971, though it was food rather than property which was being stolen.30 Serowe declined in political importance as it lost prestige to Gaborone and population to Mahalapye and Selebi-Phikwe. It was left under the charge of Rasebolai Kgama and the sons of Tshekedi, with Lenyeletse Seretse the leading voice within the district council. Leapeetswe Khama had become Tribal Authority (i.e. acting chief) in 1963. His marriage to Seodi, daughter of Dr Sebophiwa Molema, in April 1968, had been a big social event. In 1970 Leapeetswe and Seodi had gone for further studies in London, leaving Sekgoma Khama ('Secky') as acting Tribal Authority. But neither Leapeetswe nor Sekgoma were happy with the position of traditional leader, and it seems that they quarrelled bitterly with Seretse or Ruth in the early 1970s.
Serowe was becoming famous internationally as the home of two exiles who eventually became Botswana citizens - the educationalist Patrick van Rensburg and the novelist Bessie Head. Van Rensburg was still close to Seretse Khama in the early 1970s, serving on the government's Rural Development Council. Bessie Head was going through a stage that put her in Lobatse mental hospital, after she pinned up an obscene slogan about the President in the Serowe post office. This was the basis of her second novel, A Question of Power (1973).

The Office of the President moved into a brand new, yellow brick building behind the National Assembly in January 1973, and Seretse now drove a few hundred metres away from State House to work every weekday. People noticed how the clear break between Seretse's home life and office life after January 1973 seemed to improve his verve and productivity. Though

Seretse believed in the virtues of delegating tasks, he too easily got snowed under by work when both his home and his workplace were in the same buildings. He spent too much time on the documents and reports which were marked up for him by Syson until 1971, and thereafter mostly by Mpotokwane. He also enjoyed interviews with experts of all types so much that he took too many 'home' into the private rooms of State House, to quiz them over tea or evening drinks. The question often asked is how much Ruth Khama, as the constant companion of his life, influenced Seretse Khama's political judgements. The answer seems to be that she had little impact directly, since she was not a political animal. But her control of the social milieu at home, and her often sharp judgements on individuals, must have had significant indirect impact. If so, then her influence would have been diminished by the construction of separate accommodation for the Office of the President. Wits about town claimed that Seretse had had the new building built to escape his wife's tongue.

Seretse's workload was also diminished by a constitutional amendment, passed in October 1972, no longer requiring the President to stand and sit as a parliamentary candidate for a constituency. The President would in future be nominated by virtue of being the leader of the majority party in parliament. Seretse was relieved no longer to be an M.P. - he had never been really happy in the cut and thrust of parliamentary debate. But Motsamai Mpho protested at this diminution of democracy, removing the President from direct responsibility before the National Assembly. Mpho saw it as the first step on the way to autocracy. He later used a dialectical parable to explain the undesirability of a one-party state: 'Even God the Creator found that it was necessary to have opposition and he therefore made the right and the left legs and hands, man and woman, and light and darkness.'

The speeding up of localization enhanced the role of the Botswana Civil Service Association (B.C.S.A.). Seretse was concerned that the B.C.S.A. should not become 'the fourth estate' of the realm, demanding rights and privileges over the people as a whole. Assertive bureaucrats were the most significant threat to the government's policy of general wage constraint. Their agitation for higher salaries picked up in early 1972, after devaluation of the U.S. dollar was followed by
devaluation of the S.A. Rand which was still Botswana's currency. The B.C.S.A. gained a voluble president in the form of Gobe Matenge, a middle-rank official known for running informal seminars which 'pumped' senior officials for their views.34

The turnover of 'new' expatriates in the government began to increase with short term contracts and localization of their posts. Syson was replaced by Mpotokwane in the Office of the President in early 1971, and LandellMills by Festus Mogae in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning in mid-1973. The dynamism of the new bureaucracy received its accolade from South Africa's government-aligned press in the form of a renewed and intensified attack on Reds in Botswana's bed in May 1973. Die Transvaler newspaper extended the list of communists in the Botswana government to include not only Steenkamp and Landell-Mills but also Bias Mookodi, the director of external affairs in the Office of the President, and 'hundreds of supporters and fellow travellers.' Much to his delight Chief Justice Aguda from Nigeria was also mentioned. The Tansvaler attack was a backhanded compliment to the success of localization at this stage in opening up careers for talent, promoting clever individuals such as Moscow-educated Ponatshego Kedikilwe and Zagreb-educated Ben Gasenelwe higher and higher in the ranks of the public service.35

Currency negotiations with South Africa had made Landell-Mills a particular target for being discredited. South Africa was determined that Landell-Mills should not repeat his previous success in pulling the wool over its eyes in the customs union negotiations. The M.F.D.P. was happy to continue with Botswana using the S.A. Rand as its currency but wanted a share in the fiduciary issue and a say in central banking in Pretoria. Negotiations began in early 1972 but South Africa did not respond to any badgering until the badger, Landell-Mills, left Botswana in June 1973.36

Seretse himself was always wary of being bamboozled by the 'experts' in the M.F.D.P., so he sought out private advice from a Norwegian statistician. Carl Anonsen recalls how Seretse sat him down in the presidential office and asked him to outline different alternatives in understandable detail. He told Anonsen not to be shy, reminding him that he was a trained lawyer and could take a brief. Illustrating what a Botswana currency unit might be called, Anonsen claims that he cast his eyes around the room and lighted on the shield and coat of arms above Seretse's desk - and plucked the word 'Pula' from its motto.

The Botswana government approached the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Ford Foundation to set in train studies of the proposal for an independent currency. As a result Botswana's enthusiasm for staying in the S.A. Rand monetary area waned. Swaziland and Lesotho, on the other hand, went for the arrangement offered by South Africa in March 1974, whereby they would be allowed to mint and print their own currencies otherwise fully convertible with the S.A. Rand.17
In 1973 Botswana was faced with the extraordinary situation for a developing country of a sudden gush of money coming in from mineral and customs revenues, more than it could spend within the parameters being set for the 1973-78 national development plan (N. D. P-Ill). One result was the Accelerated Rural Development Programme which placed modern infrastructure in the major traditional villages, changing their characteristics for ever as highways ripped through areas of historic housing. But now there was indeed something for the B.D.P. to point to for the forthcoming elections in 1974. The inflow of funds for 1973-78 was also used in placing planning officers in each ministry and in the districts, who answered first to their ministry and only secondly to the M.F.D.P. Inevitably the officers initially appointed were young planners from America and Europe, while local counterparts were in training. The Botswana civil service at this time expanded suddenly by about a thousand officers, to number 7 700 because of the economic boom. This influx of short-term expatriates, especially into rural centres, attracted by the sudden surge of economic growth, appalled people such as Goareng Mosinyi M.P., for whom the more things changed the more they stayed the same. Against the background of the Rural Incomes Distribution Survey which had biased government against cattle owners as a privileged minority, Mosinyi called on government 'to get rid of these young men' in the Ministry of Agriculture and spend the money on free drugs for cattle owners instead. In a later parliamentary session Mosinyi attacked 'pseudo-experts' who sat around doing nothing, but Quett Masire countered him with praise for the high quality of expatriate staff now being recruited to Botswana. As well as fully paid technical staff, 'volunteers' continued to come from (in approximate order of numbers arriving) the U.S.A., Canada, Britain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and West Germany in ever greater numbers.38 Such personnel were dispersed regardless of national origins in the various government departments. Unlike many developing countries, Botswana did not allow foreign aid agencies to run their own projects but kept all activities within the scope of regular 'line' ministries and government departments, under the watchful super-eye of the M.F.D.P. Adherence and reference to the national development plan became an article of faith in Botswana to an extent extraordinary in a capitalist country. 'N.D.P.-Ill' was published in popularized form as The People and the Plan, and radio-learning groups with 2 000 radios provided by government and aid agencies were set up to go through the plan chapter by chapter in village kgotla's.39 Every district published its version of N.D.P.-III detailing local development projects. All of this contributed to Botswana's unrivalled reputation in the 1970s as a developing country which got things done with open and accountable procedures free from corruption, and helped to bring in foreign aid funds for specific projects. Seretse Khama had by now gained confidence as an international and PanAfrican statesman. This could be seen in the way in which he stuck to
principle about the necessity for the People's Republic of China to take its seat in
the United Nations, over the objections of the U.S.A. and Taiwan
- despite the fact that both the latter had representatives and aid programmes in
Botswana and were putting pressure on Gaborone.
The recognition of the People's Republic as the legitimate government of China
was one issue on which Seretse rode roughshod over the objections of his
Cabinet. All his ministers protested that recognition of the People's Republic
would be an injustice to Taiwan, which had been such a good friend to Botswana.
Seretse had to bring in an official, Lebang Mpotokwane, to try to persuade
Cabinet. But all attempts failed. Seretse therefore exercised his presidential
prerogative, as enshrined in the constitution, and ignored the advice of his
Cabinet. Botswana voted for the admission of China to the United Nations, and
the expulsion of Taiwan from China's seat, in September 1971. Sometime later
Seretse was indiscreet enough to talk about this with a visiting British journalist.
Much to his embarrassment, he found his version of these events splashed across
the front page of the next Sunday's Observer.
Seretse cultivated his reputation as 'the man [genuinely] in the middle'. This gave
him the leeway to criticize the United States, describing its decision to break
international sanctions against Rhodesia, by importing chrome, as 'most
distressing and deplorable.' As for Pan-African politics, Seretse and Ruth happily
flew off to Morocco together to meet other heads of state for a tenth anniversary
summit of the O.A.U. in Rabat in June 1972. They stopped off to see Heath,
Home and Arnold Smith about Rhodesia in London on the way back.40
Seretse's concerns, however, were more regional than continental. When he
returned from Rabat and talked about the need to counter 'the relative isolation of
African countries from each other" he was referring to southern Africa in
particular. He looked forward to the day when there would be more cooperation
between governments and peoples in the region 'in finance and development,
mutable trade, communications, education, health and other servicesl Meanwhile a
start could be made through the bilateral relationship of Botswana with Zambia.
Seretse and Kaunda continued to work together by meeting once or twice a year.
When Prime Minister Ian Smith closed Rhodesia's border-posts with Zambia at
the start of 1973, Botswana began to supply Zambia's import needs with beef and
equipment airlifted from Lobatse to Lusaka. Work on the Botswana-Zambia
highway was speeded up, and steps were taken to ensure government-to-
government cooperation in a number of fields.
Botswana began at last, as its delighted High Commissioner in Lusaka informed
Seretse in his monthly report for April 1973, to receive favourable treatment in
the Zambian press.42 At about this time Botswana also began to make secret but
tentative contacts with Frelimo, the anti-Portuguese
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liberation movement in Mozambique. Limited financial support seems to have
been made available to Frelimo. Meanwhile Seretse encouraged greater contacts
between the B.D.P. and the ruling parties of Zambia and Tanzania. Kaunda's
special assistant Mark Chona - the mastermind behind many of Kaunda's regional
and domestic policies - was among Zambian delegates who attended the B.D.P. annual conference in Lobatse in April 1973.
At the beginning of August 1973 Seretse and Ruth were in Ottawa, for the ten-day Commonwealth summit (CHOGM) that once again had Rhodesia at the head of the agenda. A photograph shows Seretse emerging from a car and being very warmly greeted by the host, Canadian premier Pierre Trudeau.43 By the end of the month Seretse and Ruth were in Tanzania on a state visit to cement the relations between Seretse and Julius Nyerere, brokered by Kaunda, that had taken so long to become warm. Seretse was delighted, describing the visit as another 'diplomatic breakthrough' - no doubt recalling Tanzania's original scepticism over the value of Botswana's independence.
Seretse and Ruth were very well received in Dar es Salaam, though this was by no means their first visit - they had taken the inaugural flight of BOAC from Dar to Johannesburg in December 1971. But this time Seretse and Nyerere met in relaxed surroundings and had wide ranging discussions on southern African issues.
Nyerere, in a speech given at a banquet on August 28th, 1973, showed how well he now understood Seretse's dilemma. He described Seretse as 'a fighter, a tightrope walker, and an expert football dribbler all rolled into one.' Seretse could not have been better pleased with the description.
At the close of the visit, on September 3rd, the two presidents issued a joint communiqué which was to be hotly criticized in South Africa. Among other issues the two presidents expressed their support for the armed struggle being waged in the Portuguese colonies of Africa, though the communiqué also specifically recognized that Botswana's role in the struggle for freedom had to be limited. Botswana could not, as Nyerere himself was later to stress on a number of occasions, be asked to commit suicide by providing military facilities for liberation movements as Tanzania did. That would invite Rhodesia and South Africa to march in and take over Botswana.44
Ironically Seretse had to meet with Muller, the South African foreign minister, almost immediately on his return south to sign the treaty precisely defining Botswana's south-eastern borders. It appears the South Africans were furious. A press release by Botswana's Office of the President a week later referred to 'hysteria in certain quarters' in South Africa, and elaborated on the degree of Botswana's support for African liberation:
The Botswana government has always condemned the denial, on the part of the regimes of the white areas of Africa, of the rights of their 303
black citizens to self-determination and equality. Further, the Government has always recognized the right of black citizens of these countries to achieve their full human rights, and has expressed support for their efforts to do so. It is the wish of Botswana that these rights be achieved by peaceful means, but where this is not possible the Botswana Government has publicly expressed its understanding where the people concerned decided to resort to violent means.45
On this, as on certain other occasions during Seretse's presidency, South Africa demonstrated its disapproval by flexing its economic muscles. South African Railways placed a temporary embargo on all goods-rail traffic to Botswana - causing stock shortages in shops and threatening Botswana's exports of chilled beef for which there was insufficient storage in Lobatse. Such problems were, as ever, blamed on technical difficulties over supply of rail trucks. But this was also clearly South Africa's bluest possible reply to the request of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland - announced only two weeks before - for a transport treaty with South Africa guaranteeing the import-export links of those land-locked states with the coast.

Relations with South Africa plummeted to a new depth after South African police shot dead 11 miners, including two Batswana and five Basotho, in Carletonville (Western Deep Levels) near Johannesburg on September 11th, 1973. The Botswana and Lesotho governments learned of the deaths of their citizens only from the media, and the South African government delayed reply to their enquiries for three days.

'It is a sad commentary on South African society,' remarked a Botswana government spokesman, 'that eleven men should have lost their lives for no other reason than they, denied of any bargaining machinery, were moved by a deep sense of frustration to demonstrate against the discriminatory terms of their employment.' He added: 'Botswana has repeatedly expressed its fears that the continued denial of fundamental human rights to the black man by the South African Government will result in violence.'

Seretse paid a state visit to Lesotho in the wake of the Carletonville shootings between October 3rd-8th, 1973. King Mosheshoe II as head of state, rather than Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan, was happily Seretse's host. In answer to Mosheshoe's state banquet speech about 'the threat of a racial explosion' in southern Africa, Seretse with more than a hint of anger replied that 'you cannot deny basic human rights to millions of human beings and expect them to fold their arms and resign themselves to a life of perpetual servitude.'

On the other days of the visit Seretse appeared fit and relaxed, opening a school, kicking off a football match, receiving a magnificent pony as a gift from Mosheshoe, and attending Lesotho's seventh independence celebrations. Arriving back in Gaborone on an Air Botswana DC-3 Dakota, he came down the steps sporting a large and elaborately top-knotted 'Basuto' straw hat on his head.

Botswana's foreign relations were rapidly radicalized in the latter part of the year 1973. In November, Botswana became the 36th African state to recognize the independence of Guinea-Bissau in West Africa from Portuguese rule, and then later in the month - more in sorrow than in anger - Botswana suddenly cut its ties with Israel. Botswana said it still recognized 'the right of Israel to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries'' but the decision was bitterly attacked by Benjamin Steinberg, the M.P. for Boteti and veteran B.D.P. treasurer, in the National Assembly. The background to this was the oil embargo being called for
by Arab and African states against South Africa as well as Israel, within which Botswana must somehow negotiate an exception. Common interests drew Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland together once more. Regular meetings began again when the Swazi and Lesotho Prime Ministers met Seretse in Gaborone on November 14th, 1973.48

Botswana's foreign policy under Seretse's guidance had now moved from the passive neutrality of British Protectorate days biased towards established interests in South Africa and Rhodesia, to a policy of 'active neutrality' biased towards the liberation movements. There was to be no question of active support for guerrilla incursions into Rhodesia or South Africa from across Botswana's borders, but such guerrillas were in future to be treated more benevolently. This new stance was made as clear as it could be in the circumstances in late 1973, when Seretse instructed Botswana's representative at the U.N. to vote in support of the legitimacy of armed struggle against colonial regimes.

Yet all this while Botswana's relationship with South Africa's Anglo American Corporation group, including the De Beers diamond mining company, was becoming ever more intimate. Western Deep at Carletonville had been an Anglo mine. The company moved quickly to pay out compensation to the dead miners' relatives in Botswana and Lesotho in time for there to be a smooth reception for the receiving of an honorary doctorate by the chairman of the group, Harry Oppenheimer, from the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland in Roma (Lesotho) in November 1973.49

On the evening of Friday, January 25th, 1974, the kitchen of a teacher's house at the Roman Catholic mission of Kgale near Gaborone was blown apart by a bomb. People on the campus who heard the explosion assumed it came from the nearby gravel quarry; it was not until next morning that children discovered the dead body of Abram Tiro. He had been assassinated by a parcel bomb posted in Switzerland. Tiro was at that time South Africa's most famous student leader, having denounced the apartheid system in an eloquent speech that reverberated around the nation after shocking the dignitaries at a university graduation. He had been forced to flee into exile to Seretse Khama's protection, as his relatives under Abram Moiloa had fled before him to Tshekedi Khama in the 1950s.

The cowardly murder brought home regional realities to people in Gaborone and elsewhere in Botswana in a powerful way. Seretse was in no doubt that the assassination was one of South Africa's 'dirty tricks' (Other parcel bombs from Switzerland had been sent to the A.N.C. in Lusaka, killing one person and deafening another.) Seretse did not hesitate to point the finger of suspicion, saying in a statement issued through the Office of the President that Tiro had 'incurred the deep displeasure of certain powerful circles in South Africa.' This drew a sharp retort from the South African foreign minister. Six months later Seretse was to remark: 'Tiro's death will have embittered many people both inside and outside South Africa who share his belief in the right of the black people of South Africa
to full human rights. But I cannot tell what this bitterness will eventually lead to.’50

Seretse was worried by the spread of ‘anti-whiteism’ among educated youth in Botswana society, influenced by ideas of black consciousness and ‘black power’ current in South Africa. Such ideas were brought into Botswana by visiting student drama groups from South Africa and by Batswana students from the main U.B.L.S. campus in Lesotho, as well as by individual exiles like Tiro. Seretse no doubt recalled his own ‘anti-white’ phase, influenced by South African student politics in the early 1940s.

The military coup of April 24th, 1974, in Portugal, and the subsequent development of left-wing ideas in that country, loosened up the political impasse in the southern African region. As the domestic situation in Portugal settled down, the way was opened to end its colonial wars in Angola and Mozambique. The implications of the Portuguese coup were quickly realized by President Kaunda of Zambia, whose country had borders and potentially vital transport links with both Angola and Mozambique. Kaunda became eager to involve South Africa in a process of regional détente which might solve the problems of Rhodesia and Namibia and look forward to change in South Africa itself.

Kaunda developed his ideas of détente in regional politics by close collaboration with Nyerere whom he met, sometimes with Samora Machel of Frelimo in attendance, on a number of occasions between May and August 1974. There were great expectations in Botswana for the state visit of President Nyerere to Gaborone in July 1974. The longest road in town, a new ring road, was duly named in his honour as Nyerere Drive. There was therefore great disappointment, and no little criticism of Nyerere’s timidity, when it was announced in May that Nyerere’s visit in July would be put off for security reasons.

Eglin and Suzman of South Africa’s progressive white opposition flattered Seretse in July 1974 that he was the vital link between southern Africa and the rest of Africa. But their actions belied their words as they flew on from Gaborone to consult Kaunda in greater depth.51

Seretse was brought into the process of détente by Kaunda and Nyerere, but it was Kaunda who conducted initial negotiations with Prime Minister Vorster of South Africa and eventually Smith of Rhodesia. Seretse was kept informed by envoys and diplomatic mail on the direct Gaborone-Lusaka air route. By August 1974 the three Presidents - Kaunda, Nyerere and Khama - were floating their ideas of détente with Britain and America as a joint initiative between Zambia, Tanzania and Botswana.

Seretse made it clear, when opening the B.D.P.’s new headquarters building in Gaborone, that he thought there was no long-term future for white minority governments in Africa. He reiterated this view when interviewed by Wilf Nussey of the Argus African News Service later in the month:

The present white-minority governments will sooner or later have to give way to more democratic forms of government. The only question is how the
transformation will come about. I would like to see the transformation brought about by peaceful means; but this will depend on the attitudes of the Governments concerned. These Governments will determine whether the white ruled states of southern Africa will achieve true democracy and equality by peaceful means or through bitter warfare. I am, as I pointed out in my recent speech, still hopeful that the worst can still be avoided. But I am afraid that time is running out fast.52

Optimism for the achievement of African majority rule in southern Africa was in the air, for the time being at least. In September 1974, Seretse announced that planning had started for Botswana to take over the operations of Rhodesia Railways on its section of the Bulawayo-Mafikeng line, a promise that was to take more than a decade to fulfil."

The idea of detente was to use the good offices of South Africa to put pressure on Smith in Rhodesia to negotiate with the Zimbabwe nationalists, who were being held in Rhodesian detention camps. Seretse was kept informed of Kaunda's secret diplomacy with Vorster and Smith. Seretse and Nyerere then flew to Lusaka for Zambia's tenth anniversary celebrations of independence, culminating on October 24th, 1974.

The key public moment actually occurred on October 26th, after Seretse had flown home for the Botswana elections. During speeches in the sweltering heat of open-air celebrations at the University of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, dressed in his robes as university vice-chancellor, told the world that detente with the White South had begun. He referred to a speech made on October 23rd by Vorster in the South African senate, calling for a solution for both Rhodesia and Namibia. Kaunda indicated that this at last was 'the voice of reason for which Africa and the rest of the world have been waiting.'

Three weeks later, 'in a spirit of great friendliness to black leaders', Vorster corrected any impression that there was any plan for multi-racial elections or a multi-racial parliament in South Africa itself: 'That will never happen.' But the process of detente over Rhodesia was now in train.14

Chapter 13
FRONT-LINE LEADER 1974-76

The general election of October 26th, 1974, the third in Botswana's history, proved to be both success and failure for Seretse Khama and the B.D.P. government. The B.D.P. won 27 out of 32 elected seats, but only 31 per cent of the electorate bothered to turn up to vote. People did not see the necessity of voting when the government seemed to be doing well enough and there was no real alternative. Seretse was very disappointed by the turn out of voters, but gratified that Quett Masire had been voted back into parliament as an elected member.

Seretse had been on tenterhooks about losing Quett Masire as his VicePresident and Minister of Finance and Development Planning in the October 1974 elections. Masire had been a nominated member of parliament since 1969 when he lost his
seat to Bathoen Gaseitsiwe. But Seretse agreed that Masire could not be Vice-President if the voters turfed him out again in 1974. Masire stood no chance in his old seat against Gaseitsiwe, but was determined to win one of the three seats in his home district which had been taken by the B.N.F in 1969. Much to Seretse's relief, Masire succeeded in winning Ngwaketse South.

Seretse used his presidential powers of nominating a few members of parliament to get 'new blood' into the Cabinet. He had approached Archie Mogwe and Gaositwe Chiepe before the elections. They had resigned from government service within the Office of the President and the diplomatic service, to become available as ministers of state for External Affairs and Commerce and Industry respectively.

Among elected members, K.P. Morake replaced veteran B.C. Thema, 'teacher of the nation, as Minister of Education. Two younger men, former radio disc-jockey Daniel Kwelagobe and former labour commissioner Peter Mmusi, joined Seretse's and Masire's ministries as assistant ministers. Seretse Khama's cousin Lenyeletse Seretse was elected as M.P. for Boteti, replacing the sickly Ben Steinberg, and also joined the government as an assistant minister.

Seretse expected his ministers to grow in the job and chaired Cabinet meetings in such a way as to make sure that this happened. Even assistant ministers were encouraged to take issue with the substantive minister if they had a point worthy of exploration. Seretse liked to take his Cabinet colleagues with him rather than push them along unwillingly into decisions. Not that Seretse was always kind with individuals; he could be sharp and cutting in his comments. Mout Nwako, who was third in line after Seretse and Masire, was sometimes unfairly the butt of biting comments by Seretse. Anyone apparently talking nonsense in Cabinet would get a sharp rebuke from the chair. Cabinet met once a week, regularly as clockwork, its business being conducted with relevant government officials present, and it set the weekly pace for ministries preparing papers and implementing its decisions. Some academic commentators on Botswana suggest that too much freedom was given to administrators to develop the lines of policy and policy documents before they were presented to Cabinet. But Seretse always liked sound and decisive advice, while his own understanding of the political process was such that he valued open discussion and collective insight. Cabinet was no rubber stamp.

Leaving Masire as Vice-President to deal with routine domestic matters, Seretse was now freer to concentrate his interests on the broad parameters of foreign policy. Mogwe worked closely with Seretse in the development of Botswana's responses to rapidly changing events in the region of southern Africa. As a civil servant Mogwe had sometimes found Seretse overcautious, liking to sleep on an issue that had important political implications. As a minister, Mogwe could now push Seretse into faster responses.

Mogwe set a cracking pace in the department of external affairs within the Office of the President. With his wide experience as an administrator, Mogwe was able to respond quickly and on the spot to any question that arose when on a
diplomatic mission unaccompanied by the President. Seretse did something virtually unheard of among African presidents - subsequently supporting views developed on the spot in public by his foreign minister. Botswana's delegations did not hold up negotiations by long cables back to headquarters, because the possible courses of debate had already been acted out in simulation exercises at the Office of the President.

Seretse's opening address for the new parliament in November 1974 welcomed growing detente in the region, but added a note of warning about the growth of bureaucracy in Botswana: 'Theft of public funds and corruption by public officers was on the increase, but would be dealt with very sternly.'

Masire pitched the address of thanks for the President's speech at the responsibility of parliament to back Seretse's involvement in regional detente: 'We should [not] sit back and depend on His Excellency's personal prestige and statesmanship to safeguard Botswana's independence. It means that we must conduct ourselves as a nation in a manner that facilitates a peaceful exchange [of power] in Southern Africa.'

The details of current international negotiations were, however, kept confidential until March 6th, 1975, when Mogwe made a long statement on the progress or rather the reversal of progress of talks on Rhodesia since December 1974.

South Africa understood Botswana's 'active neutrality' much better than Rhodesia, which looked at Botswana as another black enemy. Botswana and South Africa did not have formal diplomatic relations, and there were wars of words between them. But there was a general understanding of the parameters of the relationship because of 'telephone diplomacy' and mutual recognition of each other's legitimacy. This was not the case between Botswana and Rhodesia, because of the illegal nature of the regime in Salisbury.

Masire coined the phrase 'on the front line' to describe the common position of Zambia, Botswana and Tanzania, when he addressed Zambia's ruling party at its annual congress in August 1973. Mozambique became the fourth state 'on the front line' in 1973, when the leader of Frelimo, Samora Machel, joined the presidents of the other three states in regular meetings.

The issue of Rhodesia and its eventual transformation into Zimbabwe, with violent spillovers into Botswana, was to dominate the remaining years of Seretse's leadership. From 1973-4 onwards Rhodesia slipped into civil war between the government forces of the Smith regime and the liberation forces of ZANU and ZAPU. Minor incursions by Rhodesian troops into Botswana during 1974 culminated in the kidnapping of a ZAPU official, Ethan Dube, from Francistown in October. Tension at Kazungula, with the South African army firing at Botswana paramilitary police positions, continued even after detente was publicly mooted.'

A new British foreign minister, Seretse's old friend Jim Callaghan, acknowledged Britain's willingness to call together a constitutional conference for Southern Rhodesia - with ZANU and ZAPU as well as the Rhodesian government and Britain being represented. The first meeting of the presidents of what were becoming known as the Front-Line States followed on Thursday, November 7th,
to consider the next move. Seretse flew to Lusaka with two senior civil servants - Charles Tibone, his secretary for external affairs and Jacob Mamelodi, his private secretary at that time.

The result of this meeting was that on November 8th, Kaunda's personal aide Mark Chona was sent by prior arrangement with Ian Smith - in a move strictly kept out of the media - to collect the ZAPU and ZANU leaders Joshua Nkomo and Ndabaningi Sithole from detention in Rhodesia. Chona was disconcerted to find that Sithole had been voted out of office by ZANU members in prison and had been replaced by Robert Mugabe, but he brought along Sithole all the same. Seretse and Mogwe were back in Lusaka for meetings with the Zimbabwean nationalists on December 3rd-6th, 1974. He was as angry as the other presidents at the complications thrown up by ZANU, though the leader of ZANU in exile who was supporting Mugabe against Sithole was another old acquaintance, the lawyer Herbert Chitepo.

The Front-Line presidents dismissed the vote deposing Sithole as unrepresentative and insisted on Sithole leading the ZANU delegation. ZANU members had to comply with this after being harangued by the four presidents, but the presidents succeeded in alienating Mugabe and the bulk of ZANU members from the negotiations. ZANU was much more successful than ZAPU in military terms, and therefore resisted the attempts of the four presidents to force unity with ZAPU and with the internal nationalist party, known as the African National Council, led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa. Kaunda and Nyerere were almost wild with fury by December 6th, when Sithole first accepted unity to please them and then rejected it to curry favour with ZANU members.

Seretse chose to suppress his own irritation. Nyerere declared that he had had enough and was going home. It was Seretse who pulled him back from this rash action, which would have derailed the détente train, by saying: 'Julius, you cannot walk out on Rhodesia.' Nyerere stayed and proved to be essential, since ZANU only trusted him and Machel, in forging the Zimbabwe Declaration of Unity. This was signed on December 8th, uniting ZANU and ZAPU under the umbrella of Muzorewa's A.N.C. so that they could present a united front in negotiations with the British and the Smith regime.

Mugabe and other detained nationalist leaders in Rhodesia were then released and allowed to fly from Salisbury to Lusaka on December 15th, 1974, on board a four-piston-engined Zambian air force plane recently acquired from Yugoslavia. In exchange for their release, ZANU and ZAPU agreed to call a ceasefire in the guerrilla war during negotiations. It was difficult to believe that all this had happened so quickly, achieving in six months what the British had failed to achieve in a decade. Lady Khama recalls how proud Seretse was of the joint effort 'to obtain the release of detainees.' Mogwe was then sent off as the envoy of the three presidents to sound out the other neighbouring states of Rhodesia and South Africa - Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi and Madagascar.

Jim Callaghan and his wife arrived in Gaborone from Lusaka on Friday, January 3rd, 1975, to spend the weekend with Seretse and Ruth before flying on to
Pretoria. By this time Mogwe had returned from his trip and could talk about his round of consultations. Seretse and Callaghan met as old chums; their talks ranged widely and also touched on the question of access for Botswana's beef to the E.E.C. Seretse was emphatic that Britain should convene and chair the proposed constitutional talks, preferably in London, though he was willing to offer Gaborone as an alternative venue. The British regarded Botswana as small fry next to Zambia and Tanzania, but 'the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Downing Street were always interested in learning what the "man in Gaborone" thought of the developing situation.'

March 18th, 1975, brought the news that Herbert Chitepo had been blown up by a bomb under his car in Lusaka. The Rhodesian agents responsible managed to leave false trails to confuse and alienate ZANU’s support in the Front-Line States. Mugabe even suggested that the Zambian government was responsible for the assassination. On March 31st a furious Kaunda announced an international commission to investigate the circumstances of Chitepo's death. Seretse was personally saddened by the loss of Chitepo. The two men had got on well, ever since the urbane Chitepo had been the pioneer black lawyer in Rhodesia during the days of the Federation. Seretse saw the killing as a very severe set-back to unity among Zimbabwean nationalists. He fully supported Kaunda's action in setting up the commission of enquiry, and sent two Batswanas to join it. But he said in private that Kaunda was asking for trouble by sticking too closely to Joshua Nkomo and ZAPU, thereby alienating everyone in ZANU. Seretse also sent his personal private secretary, Joe Legwaila, with a message of sympathy to Chitepo's wife Victoria, who was living in Dar es Salaam.

Education was a major domestic issue that Seretse felt the need to confront personally in late 1974 and early 1975. The issue of education had been raised by the B.N.F. in the run up to the 1974 elections. Kenneth Koma as the B.N.F.'s ideologue had laid out his ideas in a publication entitled Education in Africa: the Naked Truth. Koma claimed that education in Botswana had been going downhill ever since 1945, before which the midcolonial educational system had at least made some attempt to be relevant to employment skills and to local culture and environment.

This argument rang bells with the generation of Tiger Kloof graduates in government, like Seretse himself and Ben Thema, his minister of education. Government had encouraged replication of van Rensburg's idea of brigades. The Brigades were self-help bodies providing basic training in building, carpentry and other skills. These bodies could cover (in theory if not always in practice) their costs by income from production. But the mainstream of primary and secondary education had been barely affected by such 'alternative' ideas - though a few schools followed a social studies syllabus called Development Studies.”

Seretse had begun to express thoughts on education in December 1969 at Lobatse. Drawing on the ideas of Julius Nyerere, he called for a more practical form of education for self-reliance (ipelegeng) so that society would not be divided 'between people who work with their heads and people who use their hands as well.' Again in April 1970, in a speech at Palapye, Seretse disparaged mere book-
learning and called for popular debate on a new primary curriculum to suit the majority of pupils who would never reach secondary school. No doubt he was inspired by recent government enthusiasm for the *brigades* which had resulted in the setting up of a National Brigades Coordinating Committee.

In May 1970 Seretse was more explicit about the purposes of education as a whole - when he addressed the problems of higher education in a speech as the chancellor of the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, delivered at the opening of the agricultural campus of the university at Luyengo in Swaziland. The first aim of education was the promotion of *rapid development ... making our lives more purposeful, much more worth living.* The second aim was *pride in ourselves and our past, which in turn would lead to a greater degree of self-confidence.* Seretse expounded on the cultural deprivation of the colonial experience:

We were taught, sometimes in a very positive way, to despise ourselves and our ways of life. We were made to believe that we had no past to speak of, no history to boast of. The past, so far as we were concerned, was just a blank and nothing more. Seretse called on historians, on this and a subsequent occasion in July, to restore their past to the people of southern Africa. "We must do this" he added, in words that are now frequently quoted and misquoted, 'for the simple reason that a nation without a past is a lost nation, and a people without a past is a people without a soul. But it was education for manpower development rather than for historical consciousness that attracted the government planners. Seretse was 'got at' by the planners between May and August 1970. The May speech had been written with the assistance of Lebang Mpotokwane in the Office of the President. By August 1970 the voice of the M.ED.P. could be clearly heard in his next speech as chancellor of U.B.L.S., delivered at the Roma campus graduation:

We must adopt an 'investment' approach to education. This is in contrast with the 'consumer' approach which has tended to be that of universities in the affluent West, where the pressure to see universities in manpower terms is less obvious.

Our approach to university education is of necessity rooted in economics; firstly, because of our poverty we place the economic priority of development planning very highly; secondly, our approach is based on an awareness of the classic definition of economics as the utilization of scarce resources.

The 'consumer' approach ... stresses the cultivation of the individual mind and the development of life-enriching abilities and skills. The 'investment' approach ... means training men and women for work which will promote economic growth and social development. The adoption of a so-called 'polytechnic' approach to higher education, however, proved to be problematic to put into practice. It helped to break up the joint university when the main campus in Lesotho, still clinging to the 'consumer' approach, went its separate way in 1975. Reform of primary and
secondary education towards a more practical curriculum also remained unimplemented. (Only the historians took Seretse at his word, pushing new 'localized' syllabi in schools from August 1973 onwards.)

Frustration with education grew to a head in both parliament and press during the latter part of 1974. The teachers' union called for a shake-up in the Ministry of Education. Seretse responded by putting in K.P. Morake as a new minister of education after the 1974 election. Seretse also took a personal interest in the setting up of a national commission to look into curriculum reform.

Anxious to break away from South African and British-African models, and to learn from American and European experience, Seretse turned for advice to the Ford Foundation and the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). However, all this took time, and the eventual report of the commission, Education for Kagisano, was not presented until 1977 by which time its practical curricular aims had almost been lost. Its main concern had become how to make primary and junior secondary education available for all children now that remarkable economic growth made this possible.

Another domestic issue that Seretse felt the need to deal with personally in late 1974 and early 1975 was what he called 'anti-whiteism' - the manifestation, hopefully temporary, of regional racial tensions within Botswana itself. There were of course many reasons to be critical of some white people. Masire had had to lecture whites in Francistown about their racial exclusiveness in 1969, and Seretse had read the riot act to roughneck whites brought in to start up mining in the 'bush' at Selebi-Phikwe in 1971. Selebi-Phikwe, he told them, was a 'construction camp which must become a community.' They had to respect the law of Botswana and the norms of 'what we regard as civilized behaviour [which] means dealing with your fellow men on a basis of mutual respect and equality.'

The Botswana Daily News periodically carried its share of stories of gross racial insults uttered by whites visiting from neighbouring countries. But it was the civil war in Rhodesia and Rhodesian incursions into Botswana which most clearly embittered race relations, especially within a hundred kilometres of the border with Rhodesia. Seretse's remarks in March 1975, when the Indian High Commissioner presented his credentials, should be seen against a lurking fear that Botswana's former achievement of racial harmony was being lost:

We in Botswana hold no brief for the myth that conflict and disharmony are inherent elements of societies in which the white man and the black are forced to live together. The successful implementation of our philosophy of non-racialism has destroyed this myth, and we hope that those who still believe in the incompatibility of races will think again in the light of our experience.

Perhaps Seretse was too prone to see parliamentary attacks on the person of Phil Steenkamp, who had replaced Mogwe as his permanent secretary, as 'anti-whiteism'. Matante continued to attack 'former colonial master' Steenkamp. He suggested that Steenkamp was another Bruwer, the Rhodesian spy who had just published a book claiming to have subverted Kaunda's intelligence service.
Matante further alleged that the civil service was controlled by an invisible government of white free-masons grouped in 'Lodge Notwane'. Steenkamp himself readily acknowledges that he ruffled feathers among civil servants by taking tough and decisive actions rather than fudging issues or letting things slide. If Seretse, who had not become president in order to do the work of the permanent secretaries, appreciated him all the more for that.

What worried Seretse even more was what followed the day after Matante's attack on Steenkamp. On Saturday, March 15th, 1975, a B.N.F. speaker in a Gaborone 'freedom square' not only attacked Steenkamp but also called for 'Tsafendas' methods against unpopular leaders - invoking the name of Verwoerd's assassin of 1966.

Seretse's speech two weeks later at the 14th annual conference of the B.D.P. at Mahalapye, Koma's home town, made it clear how much he was concerned with current 'anti-whiteism'. Some government officers, he said, were being attacked in parliament "not because they are incompetent or unpatriotic but simply because they are white.' Implicitly harking back to the Puo Phaa affair of 1967, he also issued a strong warning to the B.N.F that once again it might be necessary to 'ensure that law and order is maintained in this country.' It is evident that Seretse once again saw the B.N.F. as neither loyal nor democratic in intent, needing to be kept under Special Branch surveillance.

Seretse's fears of wild 'anti-whiteism' and treasonable subversion cannot have been quieted by other performances in parliament. One of the ruling party's own backbenchers, Wellie Seboni, populist politician and big businessman, offered the definition of Botswana as 'an independent state ruled by white men with black hands.' And the B.P.P. member for Mochudi in the National Assembly aimed his libels directly against the President himself:

You go to the Organisation of African Unity and bluff them that you support Freedom Fighters, you support the liberation of Rhodesia, you support the liberation of South Africa, when in actual fact you arrest Freedom Fighters and send them to be murdered there? You are bluffing the world. You are telling the world what you are not practising here and this is not fair.

Towards the end of April 1975, Seretse and Ruth, together with their twin sons Tony and Tshekedi, flew off to London en route to the 20th Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Jamaica. The Callaghans had the Khamas to dinner to return their hospitality of a few months before. Seretse had more formal discussions with Callaghan and an interview on the BBC African Service, and joined Kaunda and Nyerere to put final touches to a joint paper for the CHOGM. He also went for a medical check-up at the London Clinic.

Ruth and the twins went without Seretse to dinner at the house of Tony and Caroline Benn in Holland Park Avenue. Benn recorded in his diary that the two 16-year-old boys were 'six foot three, and that his daughter Melissa (Seretse's god-daughter) 'got on with them well, though she found them very reactionary.' The next day Caroline Benn went with Ruth Khama to see Seretse at Botswana's...
High Commission - an apartment near Buckingham Palace: 'Seretse said that the [European] Common Market was not in the interests of Botswana because they couldn't sell their beef to Britain as they used to: 22

The Commonwealth summit held in Kingston, Jamaica, from April 29th to May 6th, had a pre-prepared agenda dominated by discussion of world economic trends since the oil crisis of 1973. But Michael Manley, its host as the prime minister of Jamaica, decided to push the Rhodesian issue to the forefront. In a personal capacity he invited to Kingston the four party leaders - Muzorewa, Sithole (not Mugabe), Nkomo and Chikerema who had signed the Zimbabwe Declaration of Unity in December 1974. As far as can be established, Seretse and maybe even Nyerere and Kaunda knew nothing of this invitation in advance of arriving at Kingston. The presence of the four Zimbabweans rather overshadowed the joint position paper of the three Front-Line presidents. After preliminary discussions in relaxed surroundings, the formal debate on Rhodesia was held on May 1st, 1975. Seretse found himself sitting next to the British prime minister, Harold Wilson, at the conference. Wilson had arranged for the United Kingdom to be registered as 'Britain' at the conference, so that he could happily sit between Seretse Khama of Botswana and Pierre Trudeau of Canada - rather than next to the vicious dictator of Uganda, Idi Amin. In the event Amin did not turn up, as he was busy posturing for an invasion of Tanzania.23 Informal discussions on Rhodesia continued after May 1st, between the three Front-Line presidents on one side and Wilson and Callaghan on the other, with the Commonwealth secretary-general Arnold Smith in between. The three presidents encouraged Callaghan to develop proposals for a constitutional conference based on written safeguards for whites who wished to continue living in Rhodesia after internationally recognized independence.

After the Kingston CHOGM, Seretse and Ruth went on to make state visits to the island of Barbados and to Guyana on the mainland of South America. Forbes Burnham, the Prime Minister of Guyana, was of course an old friend of Seretse's from London student days. Seretse and Ruth arrived back home in Gaborone on May 20th. Seretse took no part in a 'ditente symposium' organized by a group of South African businessmen in Gaborone over the next few days - for participants from South Africa and the FrontLine States. Tibone and Legwaila from the Office of the President were sent along instead. But Seretse did oblige the symposium by defining how ditente as pursued by the Front-Line States differed from 'dialogue' as pursued by South Africa. 'Dialogue' was an attempt by South Africa to explain and justify apartheid; ditente was about achieving majority rule in Rhodesia. Seretse had plenty of work to do, catching up with the backlog in the office. The Khamas did, however, host an enormous reception for 700 guests in the State House garden on President's Day, May 29th. This year's celebrations were marked by the performance of and praise for Botswana's greatest traditional musician, the aged Ratsie Setlhako, whose sonorous chanting and twanging one-string segaba was one of the most popular requests on Radio Botswana.24 One result of the Front-Line brotherhood of presidents was that Botswana joined Tanzania and Zambia on Idi Amin's little list of countries where he urged the
military to overthrow their leaders. All three countries responded by boycotting O.A.U. meetings in Kampala while Amin held the annual chairmanship of the body. Much more serious were the attempts of Nyerere, Machel, Kaunda and Seretse to keep the four Zimbabwean liberation movements unified within the African National Council. The presidents met in July 1975 and again in September.

By this time the Front-Line presidents had developed their working routine. They convened whenever one of them felt that an issue was coming up that needed a top-level meeting - often at very short notice. This put a strain on physical stamina as well as political commitment, and on none more than Seretse Khama, as they had to fly thousands of kilometres to and from meetings. But Seretse willingly gave of himself, and continued to prepare for the meetings as well as he and his external affairs team could manage.

The external affairs team within the Office of the President, supervised by Archie Mogwe as minister of state and then as full minister after July 1975, varied little over time. Lebang Mpotokwane left to become High Commissioner in London for less than a year in December 1974, returning as administrative secretary to the Office of the President. Joe Legwaila as Seretse's personal private secretary was joined by a bright new recruit, Sam Mpuchane, in the external affairs division. Together with Seretse they would carefully mull over issues and discuss the likely views of all the parties involved and the part that Seretse and Botswana would play. As the precise agenda for a Front-Line meeting was often not known in advance, they would act out possible scenarios on the way to the meeting, to anticipate a number of possible outcomes.

It is sometimes suggested that Botswana was a reluctant Front-Line State. There was, within both Cabinet and National Assembly, undoubtedly a reluctance to see Botswana turned into a battle-ground for Rhodesia or South Africa. Almost surrounded by hostile neighbours, Botswana had a strong interest in peace, in negotiations, in keeping lines of communication open. Seretse continued to believe strongly that negotiation was ultimately the only way in which disputes could be settled. But by joining the Front-Line initiative he became associated with liberation movements using violence to achieve state power. Seretse justified this as violence on one side (the colonial regimes) being met with violence on the other (the liberation movements) only as far as and until the warring parties could be persuaded to sit down and talk.

Seretse was fond of saying that 'though Botswana has no armies or funds to contribute to the struggle, we can contribute our example of a successful, non-racial democracy' - seeing his task as being to ensure that the ultimate aims of peace and prosperity for the whole region were not lost sight of in the processes of struggle.21

Seretse's general principles, combined with a pragmatic approach to issues in detail, were by this time better understood in the world. He was now entering a period when his personal qualities of patience and good humour, discretion when required, and honest talking when it was needed, were to be put to the test in keeping the Front-Line brotherhood together.
Seretse had been friends with Kaunda for a decade. Nyerere had by now overcome his initial wariness of Seretse to become an increasingly close friend and ally. Machel with his very different background was still wary of Seretse, but was to find common ground in their mutual experience and insistence on practical non-racialism. (Their families were to become good friends, and to remain so after their deaths.) Seretse played up the humour of his being a wicked capitalist and softhearted liberal among avowed socialists of different ilks. On arriving at one meeting in a small plane which parked alongside the hulking presidential aircraft of his brother presidents, Seretse remarked: 'I do enjoy meeting all you socialists. By the way, I notice that I am the only one to come in a hired plane.' He also distributed oranges from his Seleka farm among them, saying, 'Look what this capitalist has brought you all, this time.' Because of his rank at birth, Seretse was often addressed in jest as 'Chief. Seretse countered by drawing attention to Nyerere's lesser known aristocratic origins, greeting him as 'Headman'.

Kaunda teased Seretse over his taste for dried phane worms, a kind of silk-worm that lives on mopane trees in northern Botswana. When phane worms were in season, Seretse kept in his pocket a brown paper bag stuffed with them, which he liked to offer round to his fellow presidents at the most unlikely moments. So when Seretse dug in his pocket to so much as wipe his brow with a handkerchief, Kaunda might shout at him 'Seretse, you have dropped your worms.' Alternatively, 'Seretse, pick up your worms,' implying that Seretse kept them in his handkerchief. Such teasing and good humour helped to keep the meetings of the presidents on an even keel, at times when considerable stress and fatigue might otherwise have prompted bickering.

Botswana's policy of urban-industrial exploitation to finance rural development, rather than vice versa, as in Zambia and elsewhere, came under increasing pressure. Wage restraint was challenged by increasingly self-conscious bureaucrats and mine workers. The civil servants' union attacked the government in July 1972 for 'experimenting with socialist policies' in its prices and incomes policy - i.e. restraining the growth of a 'bureaucratic bourgeoisie'. Civil service pressure for improved pay and conditions grew more vocal with each rise in the cost of living, but was contained by regular pay reviews. Staff in private banks were similarly vocal through their union, striking for more pay in November 1974.

Mine workers at Selebi-Phikwe, constrained by trade union legislation and by the initial monopoly of skilled jobs by foreigners such as Basotho, were less coherent about industrial working class interests. But, encouraged by news of rising labour militancy in the mines of South Africa, 1974 saw a spate of small 'illegal' strikes at Selebi-Phikwe. These culminated in the threat of a large 'legal' strike in November, protesting over lay-offs and lack of localization of skilled labour positions.26

The mine workers at Selebi-Phikwe were temporarily quietened by Seretse. He explained to them the genuine financial difficulties of the mining company,
pushed into enormous debt by the inadequacy of its smelter. 'Illegal' small strikes resumed by April 1975 as the cost of living rose after devaluation of the S.A. Rand. Miners became increasingly aggravated as salaried staff elsewhere got pay rises to compensate for the rise in the cost of living. Vice-President Masire flew to Selebi-Phikwe to explain that the company was already losing R3 million a month. He was mobbed by almost 3000 miners who rocked his car and shouted: 'We want our money and nothing else' The response was riot police and wholesale dismissals. Seretse was completely unsympathetic, describing the miners as some of the 'few Batswana who are fortunate enough to find relatively well paid employment.' Seretse appeared before Selebi-Phikwe workers in person five months later. He confirmed his government's policy of wage restraint for 'civil servants and mine workers ... the fortunate few'. He also denied government collusion with the mining company which had been dismissing 'people they did not like.' The battle with the miners had been won; the show-down with civil servants, spurred on by the massive devaluation of the Rand in September 1975, was yet to come.27

The 1970s saw the emergence of major contradictions in rural development. Government policies were being subverted by the minority interests of a 'cattle-owning democracy. Bureaucrats and politicians were investing their salaries in cattle. Cattle seemed to people to be both a good investment and a way to retain strong links and increase status in their home districts. Though relatively few could really profit from cattle sales, many aspired to - and thus the 'cattle lobby' in politics increased by leaps and bounds. Hence Botswana developed a more rural-linked ruling class, and perhaps more of a national bourgeoisie, than elsewhere in independent Africa. The President himself had inherited wealth in cattle, but he sympathized with those from the Vice-President downwards who were in the business of accumulation.

In June 1971 the government declared itself in favour of fencing off communal grazing areas 'as a means of land conservation,' while resisting such land being given over to individual land tenure 'since this could lead to the disinheritance of the mass of people.' Botswana's national semiscientific body, the Botswana Society, backed this up with a symposium on 'sustained production from semi-arid areas' The idea of conservation without dispossession was behind the formulation of what became known as the Tribal Grazing Lands Policy (T.G.L.P.). The proposed policy, as outlined by Seretse in July 1975, stressed the subsidy of syndicates of small cattle owners to drill wells and fence areas of underutilized Kalahari sandveld - providing 'more equitable distribution of the available grazing land.' (The prior rights to such land by migratory hunter-herders, such as 'Bushmen', were dismissed by the Attorney-General's office, on the basis of an English dictionary definition of 'nomad')

T.G.L.P. was actually welcomed by Bathoen Gaseitsiwe and Phillip Matante in parliament. Only Motsamai Mpho expressed fears that 'dividing the land into
grazing zones would lead to a country of landless on the one hand and landlords on the other. Masire replied that T.G.L.P. was still open to popular consultation before it could be accepted as government policy. Three weeks later, in August 1975, Seretse was out campaigning for T.G.L.P. He addressed kgotla meetings in Kanye and Molepolole, clenching his fists and pleading with people, 'A re chengeng' a piece of pidgin Setswana-English meaning 'Let us change'.

On Monday, October 20th, 1975, the Lesotho government rushed through legislation to expropriate all the assets of the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland on the main Roma campus in Lesotho. The break had been some time coming but was totally unexpected all the same. Troubles had begun on the Roma campus in Lesotho in January 1975, with student strikes against certain lecturers. Further troubles ensued in August when a report by the university administration recommended radical devolution of teaching and administration to Swaziland and Botswana, and attributed the January strikes to politicians currying favour for Lesotho's ruling party. Jonathan stormed out of a meeting with Masire and the Swazi prime minister held in Swaziland in September, and negotiations between the three countries over the future of U.B.L.S. reached deadlock. Botswana and Swaziland withdrew their students from Lesotho, and embarked on emergency plans for the teaching of social and natural sciences in Botswana, and law in Swaziland.

There was a sense of excitement in the air that Botswana had finally broken from the colonial vestige of the High Commission Territories. U.B.L.S. was no longer cost effective for Botswana anyway, as there had been only 69 Batswana students in Lesotho. Wellie Seboni caught the mood in parliament with the proposal that the people should contribute towards the building of a full university for Gaborone by a 'One Man, One Beast' fundraising campaign. (In southern African English, 'beast' rather than 'cow' is the singular form of 'cattle'.)

Matante and Mpho joined in the spirit with an extraordinary set of praises for the President. Seretse had apparently just recovered from another bout of illness. Wellie Seboni went further, referring to Seretse's role in subcontinental politics, and coined the phrase: 'Botswana is an island of sanity in an ocean of political madness.'

The health of the ruler and the health of the nation displayed a curious parallelism. Against the background of the strengthening economy, domestic issues and the stress caused by the racial war emerging in Rhodesia, played havoc with Seretse's moods. He seems to have swung between depression and elation. Seretse's old fondness for beer or stronger liquor was periodically brought back by the depressions that poor control of diabetes gave rise to, while alcohol of course exacerbated the diabetes itself. Lady Khama also recalls a diabetic fit brought on by over-indulgence in orange juice.
Seretse was admitted to the Scottish Livingstone Memorial Hospital at Molepolole on Sunday, September 28th, 1975, two days before the ninth independence anniversary celebrations, for observation because of high blood pressure. Dr Merriweather conducted tests and considered him well enough for Ruth and their daughter Jacqueline to fly off to London for a week on October 6th, for the 'Woman of the Year' luncheon held in the Savoy Hotel. On the 7th, Seretse was discharged from hospital and was taken to his ranch at Seleka for a further three weeks rest in a place where he would receive few visitors. By Tuesday, November 4th, he was back at his desk in Gaborone. Illness might lay Seretse low but he could recover his energy in a very short time. Both his wife and his physician confirm that Seretse had a high pain threshold.

Seretse must have been amused by the cartoon of him which appeared in the Botswana Daily News on Monday, January 5th, 1976. It shows him teetering on a tight-rope with Vorster, Smith, Idi Amin and Leabua Jonathan baying beneath him. Smith carries a gun. There is also a rocket marked 'inflation'. He continued to work a full day and to fly to Front-Line meetings, but he was also booked into the London Clinic for a further medical check-up in February 1976.

After receiving the credentials of a new Soviet ambassador, Seretse with Ruth and Dr Merriweather flew off in an Anglo American Corporation jet to take a Johannesburg-London 'jumbo' After the checkup Seretse and Ruth stayed on for a further ten day holiday in Britain."

Rumours began to circulate that Seretse Khama was no longer enthusiastic about carrying the burdens of office. The need for increased state and personal security because of the border war, the spate of hate letters and assassination threats from white South Africans or Rhodesians that followed every new move of Front-Line support for African nationalists, and the general mood of violence, had chipped away at his spirit. The days were gone when President Khama was to be seen taking his place in a Saturday morning bank queue in the Gaborone Mall. Walls started to go up around State House in 1974; a suburban street was also appropriated to extend the grounds of State House. Seretse fretted over the fact that he was no longer permitted, for security reasons, to venture out of State House on foot to shop or gossip in the Mall. Seretse and Ruth already had their ranch at Seleka. Now they also bought a small farm just north of Gaborone in the freehold block of land near Odi. Both might be thought of as retirement homes. Lady Khama acknowledges that she and Seretse discussed retirement plans from time to time, but asserts that such plans were never specific or serious. These rumours reached fever pitch when Seretse took ill on his return from a state visit to India in April 1976. One popular suggestion was that his resignation would take effect from the tenth anniversary of independence in September. Seretse felt obliged to counter the speculation in a speech to the B.D.P. annual conference on April 17th, condemning the rumours as opposition attempts to cause 'alarm and confusion through false information.'

Prime Minister Ian Smith of Rhodesia was persuaded by Vorster to talk to the leaders of the African National Council on August 25th-26th, 1975, in South
Africa's presidential 'white train, parked on top of the railway bridge in the spray of Victoria Falls between the Zambian and Rhodesian banks of the Zambezi. Vorster and Kaunda stood by while Smith, Muzorewa and the rest negotiated. Kaunda tried to tell Vorster one of the 'van der Merwe' jokes which Seretse had told him. The punch line of the joke was that back in Zambia the job of prime minister was good enough only for a 'kaffir. Kaunda was obviously hugely amused, but Vorster remained stoney faced. Meanwhile Seretse and Nyerere had reservations about the Victoria Falls meeting, which they regarded as entirely Kaunda's initiative - but Seretse did at least send along Tibone and Legwaila to give moral support, to observe and to report back to Cabinet in Gaborone.

By mid-September 1975, when the Front-Line presidents met again, it was clear that Muzorewa's 'A.N.C.' was beginning to split back into its component parts. Smith tried to buy off Nkomo by holding talks with ZAPU in October-November 1975 and again in December 1975-January 1976. After the first set of talks, Nkomo came to Gaborone to brief Seretse, who had just returned from hospital and sick leave. Seretse expressed his disapproval at separate factional talks with Smith, but said he would go along with them if they produced the desired result - free and fair elections in which all political views could be represented, followed by a government of the people's choice. But Smith muffed any chance of this on New Year's Eve, when he announced that any constitutional settlement would have to guarantee power in white hands 'for all time.' Nkomo abandoned negotiations till March 1976.

While international negotiations on Rhodesia proceeded, Botswana came briefly under the spotlight of the world press again for a completely different reason. The movie stars Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton were remarried on the Chobe by the Kasane District Commissioner. It is not known if they heard South African and Rhodesian troops firing 70 shots over the heads of Botswana paramilitary police a few kilometres away on that same day.

Seretse and Kaunda did not see eye to eye with Nyerere and Machel on the question of Angola at conferences of the four Front-Line presidents.

Angola was an entirely different kettle of fish from Mozambique where there had been one clear victor in the liberation war. The M.P.L.A. liberation movement, which controlled the main towns and railways and was ideologically close to Frelimo in Mozambique, had declared itself as the government of an independent People's Republic of Angola on November 1th, 1975. But the two other Angolan liberation movements, F.N.L.A. and UNITA, refused to accept this. Kaunda, who had recently developed good relations with UNITA and with a dissident faction of M.P.L.A., insisted that there should be a government of national unity until elections could be called. Seretse went along with this idea at a special meeting of the O.A.U. held at Addis Ababa in January 1976. Machel and Nyerere on the other hand stood out for recognition of M.P.L.A. as the legitimate government of Angola. Seretse was quite candid about it to the press: 'We did not all of us take the same line at the meeting we had this morning. We agreed to disagree.'
Seretse held little truck with the essentially undemocratic notion of any party being 'sole and authentic' representatives of a whole people before actual elections: the B.D.P. had suffered before independence when Matante and the B.P.P. had grabbed that label at the O.A.U. But matters had been complicated by the invasion of Angola by South Africa in support of UNITA and EN.L.A., against M.P.L.A., and by the humiliating withdrawal of South African forces after sufficient U.S. support was not forthcoming. Students on the university campuses of Lusaka and Gaborone took to the streets in pro-M.P.L.A. demonstrations in February 1976. University of Zambia students accused Kaunda of 'criminal treachery'. Gaborone students were gender in their protests. But the tide was flowing against Seretse and Kaunda. On February 16th Botswana recognized the M.P.L.A. government, as it was evidently in effective control of Angola.

Meeting at Quelimane in Mozambique on February 7th-8th, 1976, just before he went off to the London Clinic, Seretse and the three other FrontLine presidents gave unqualified support to the Zimbabwean nationalists' decision to resume armed struggle against the Smith regime. President Machel of Mozambique then announced, on March 3rd, his decision to close Mozambique's borders with Rhodesia, thus precluding land-locked Rhodesia from using its railways and ports. The Times of London, on March 5th, speculated on the possibility of Botswana following suit by closing its border and blocking the railway from Bulawayo through Botswana to South Africa. Mogwe later acknowledged that Botswana had considered this. There were after all 14 trains a day moving in either direction along the line. But Botswana had no administrative capacity to run the line which was owned and operated by Rhodesia Railways. It also carried Botswana's beef and copper-nickel exports to South African ports, and South Africa as Rhodesia's ally might, as before, impose embargos.

Botswana now began to actively look around for technical and administrative support, from friendly countries, to take over the railway line from Rhodesia Railways. A last burst of negotiations by Nkomo and Smith ended in bitter recriminations on March 19th, 1976. The Front-Line leaders met in Lusaka on March 24th-25th. Returning home on the Thursday afternoon, a weary Seretse faced a press conference. He described further negotiations as 'futile' and Ian Smith as a 'difficult and slippery character'. 'Is it worthwhile continuing the dialogue with Smith?' asked one journalist. Seretse's reply illustrates his own frustrations and disappointments:

The British tried a long time ago - 'Tiger' and 'Fearless', the Pearce Commission and what have you. Nkomo tried. I do not think Smith has ever budged from his position. He has said No to majority rule in his lifetime, in a thousand years. So it doesn't matter how patient you are, how much goodwill you have, nor how much you shun bloodshed, you must at some stage get fed-up.

Because of Rhodesian and potential South African aggression, Seretse undertook a new offensive of cultivating the widest possible international support for
Botswana, both moral and technical, during 1976. Three diverse countries in Asia and North America, which had already shown particular friendship, were chosen for official and state visits - two Commonwealth and one Communist. India, Canada and China also had elaborate railroad systems and might offer assistance to Botswana in taking over its own railway operations. There were also to be visits to the U.S.A. and North Korea.

Between April 1st-8th Seretse went on a state visit to India with Archie Mogwe at his side as foreign minister. Other members of the party included his physician Dr Merriweather, Lady Khama and their eldest son Ian Khama - who sported his uniform as a paramilitary police officer on all official occasions. India was glad to renew official contact with a region in which it had had considerable interest, now blocked by apartheid, ever since the days of Mahatma Gandhi in Natal. Seretse was warmly welcomed at New Delhi's army airport by President Ahmed and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

The itinerary included research laboratories and agricultural colleges, the Taj Mahal, Bombay, Madras and the Hindustan Aeronautics factory in Bangalore, South India. Photographs show Ruth Khama looking wistfully at 'a love immortalised in marble', and showing keen interest, together with Ian, in checking over a jet fighter plane. (Ian had a civilian pilot's licence after flying school in Scotland.)

Speeches made by Seretse represented the views of the Front-Line States in general on Rhodesia and South Africa, laced with personal comments such as that Ian Smith was a typical racialist because he could only be moved by force. Prompted by the enquiries of Indian journalists, the main thrust of Seretse's comments in all parts of India had to be to explain why Africans in Rhodesia and South Africa had abandoned Gandhian tactics and resorted to violence. The main outcome of the visit was an agreement for India to supply mathematics and science teachers to Botswana.40

Ruth feared the impact of Indian cuisine on Seretse's diabetic diet which required blandness and no fat. Her care was not, however, always appreciated by Seretse, who liked tasty food as well as fatty meat and did not like to be reminded in public about his diet. No doubt catching the spirit of Seretse's response to her fussiness, Botswana civil servants sometimes referred to Lady Khama as 'mother' - though never in her earshot. Seretse managed to avoid all stomach problems until the return flight from India: even then Merriweather succumbed before Seretse. The Khamas were obliged to stay over for a couple of days in Nairobi with their old friends the Njonjos.41

Arriving back in Gaborone on Monday, April 12th, Seretse and Ruth were met with the news that their son Tshekedi had just had an accident on his motor cycle at the crossroads near the university campus. He was flown to Johannesburg for medical treatment but the injuries turned out not to be serious.42

The end of April 1976 brought U.S. Secretary of State (i.e. foreign minister) Henry Kissinger to the region. He was trying to repeat the 'shuttlediplomacy', flying rapidly from capital to capital to push forward each stage of negotiation,
which had apparently served him well in the Middle East. Kissinger's reason for sudden concern in southern Africa was his fear for Western interests following the arrival of Cuban troops in Angola and the inflow of Soviet arms there from March 1976.

Seretse's fear was that Kissinger's blundering into the arena would exacerbate the situation along the lines that South Africa had always desired and worked for, by equating African liberation with communism - putting the 'West' behind South Africa and pushing the Front-Line States into the arms of the 'East'. Thankfully for Botswana, the existing Gaborone airport was too small to accommodate the planes of Kissinger's flying circus, so Seretse played no role in interchanges with the Kissinger mission.

Seretse was kept informed by the other Front-Line leaders. He was not unhappy that Kissinger thought him too unimportant to consult. Seretse was sceptical about Kissinger's belated discovery of Africa, and at Kissinger's vanity in supposing that he could deliver Ian Smith to constitutional talks in a matter of weeks.

The U.S. ambassador in Gaborone, for his part, was most upset at Kissinger's neglect of a state which the U.S. should promote, rather than ignore, as a model for the region. The ambassador arranged for Kissinger to squeeze in a meeting with Seretse at Nairobi, more than 3 000 kilometres away by air. Officials in the Office of the President advised Seretse not to go: if Kissinger really wanted to see Seretse he could come to Gaborone in a smaller plane.

Seretse was not proud; he was quite prepared to fly to Nairobi at Kissinger's insistence, but only if it was really necessary.

After winning the initial trust of the Front-Line States, Kissinger threw himself into the task of getting Vorster to persuade Smith to have talks about talks. But first Smith had to be persuaded to even talk to Vorster: this did not happen until September 19th. Having dissipated his energies in getting whites to talk to whites, and assuming that the blacks were taken care of by talking to the Front-Line States, the Kissinger initiative collapsed over its failure to consult the Zimbabwe liberation movements. Meanwhile the African National Council had finally bust wide open with Mugabe's ZANU going its own way to resume armed struggle in May 1976, with Nkomo's ZAPU not far behind. It is scarcely surprising therefore that Archie Mogwe, with characteristic public candour, was to dismiss the whole Kissinger initiative in October 1976 as 'Much Ado About Nothing.'

The Rhodesian war resumed with guerrillas penetrating on three fronts. The major guerrilla thrust by ZANU was through Mozambique. ZAPU operated mainly from Zambia, but also infiltrated via Botswana. ZAPU’s operations in Botswana were limited by the government's refusal to allow guerrilla bases on its soil. In deference to Rhodesia's superior military might, ZAPU guerrillas found by Botswana's police mobile unit were disarmed - before being passed back to Zambia. Guerrillas crossed the border periodically for rest and refuge, and for political direction from ZAPU officials resident in Francistown, but always with discretion.
Rhodesian forces began to systematically harass people on the Botswana side of the border, in order to create a security buffer zone 20 or 30 kilometres wide inside Botswana within which freedom fighters could find no shelter. During 1976 there was a total of 33 border incidents inflicted on Botswana - including intimidation, kidnapping, and several deaths on the Ramokgwebane river border at the hands of trigger-happy Rhodesian soldiers. The response of people in Botswana, particularly in the northeast, was one of uncertainty and anger. If the Rhodesians hoped that strongarm tactics against an almost defenceless state would pressure it into passivity, they were mistaken.

Seretse was back on his travels again in June 1976, being away from the country for three weeks. His first appointment was in Oxford on June 4th where he visited Balliol College - of which he had been an honorary fellow since 1969 - and Oxfam (the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief), and gave a talk to Oxford University's African Society.

Seretse relaxed and enjoyed himself, giving the audience of 600 students and academics in the lecture hall of Rhodes House a surprisingly hardhitting speech, attacking the West for 'double standards' in collaborating with South Africa while professing to stand for 'one man one vote'. He referred to the recent Byrd amendment in the U.S. Congress which breached sanctions against Rhodesia, and attacked France's nuclear pact with South Africa which was 'even more deplorable when one takes into account the fact that it is France which is presently trying to [make] ... it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for Botswana to export ... beef into the EEC market on reasonable terms.' France and the West had to choose either Black Africa or White Africa: they could not have both. Once again Seretse was obliged to justify violence in the cause of liberation: Much as we in Botswana would have preferred peaceful change in Rhodesia (for which we have worked so hard) to violent revolution, we have now accepted that it would be unrealistic for us to expect peaceful change in a situation where the oppressors of our people prefer war to peace.

From Oxford Seretse left on a semi-official trip to the U.S.A., followed by an official visit to Canada. The U.S. itself was in bicentennial mood for its own independence celebrations on July 4th, while Botswana's tenth anniversary was coming up on September 30th.

In New York Seretse visited the Botswana delegation and Secretary-General Waldheim at the United Nations building. He was entertained to luncheon by David Rockefeller and the Chase Manhattan bank group; and he was praised for his achievements by Congressman Charles Diggs and the Congressional black caucus at a reception at the Charles Gallery in Haarlem.

In New Jersey Seretse received an honorary doctorate from prestigious Princeton University, watched by Ruth and Archie Mogwe who were photographed enthusiastically clapping. In Wye, Maryland, Seretse 'faced' an angry bull securely penned in its corral.
On the morning of June 9th, Seretse met President Gerald Ford at the White House in Washington. Ford had been urged to meet Seretse by his National Security adviser Brent Scowcroft as long ago as April 6th, 'to underscore the U.S. commitment to majority rule in southern Africa ... [and] as an opportunity to underline our concern about Soviet-Cuban military involvement'47 That evening Seretse was back in New York for his second address in seven years to the American Council on Foreign Relations. He began by observing that 'the aura of invincibility which has hitherto surrounded the remaining colonial enclaves in southern Africa is clearly being dissipated. 329

He went on to regret that the West was being duped into regarding African 'freedom fighters as communist-inspired terrorists.' People had been driven to violence by Mr Smith 'shooting and hanging them in Rhodesia simply because they were refusing to be treated like slaves in their own country.' Using the sort of African imagery which would appeal to U.S. audiences he called on the U.S. to restrain the 'rogue elephant' Smith. Finally he explained why Botswana could not commit suicide by blocking the railway line which carried only 20 per cent of Rhodesia's imports and exports.

The speech clearly went down well, as did a further dinner speech before the African-American Institute, reinforcing Seretse's reputation as a principled statesman open to pragmatic reasoning. Seretse told the New York imes that he quite understood why South African whites feared the unknown and why even 'moderate liberals' could not bring themselves to brook rapid change.48

Arriving in Ottawa on June 11th, Seretse inspected the guard at the airport provided by the Royal Canadian Air Force and was welcomed warmly by his friend Pierre Trudeau. Canada had good reason to be friendly with one of the few African countries which was not going to boycott the forthcoming Montreal Olympics - in protest at the participation of New Zealand which had sent a rugby team to play in South Africa. Seretse spent four days on outings and talks with Trudeau. He and Ruth visited a dairy farm and an exhibition of weavings by the women's cooperative workshop at Odi in Botswana.

At the end of the four days, Seretse addressed the joint Foreign Relations Committee of Canada's Senate and House of Commons - still with that spark of acceptable radical fire in his belly. It was June 15th, 1976, the eve of what was to be the most traumatic day in South African history. Seretse kicked off his 45 minute speech with a rejection of the forthcoming 'independence' of South Africa's Transkei territory. To recognize it would be 'to extend moral and constitutional legitimacy to the institution of racial separation.' He then went on to distinguish "multi-racialism' from nonracialism, which looked to a 'country free from racial prejudices and complexes.' Referring to South Africa, he said: 'No one in that country has the right to deny others the enjoyment of its wealth and economic opportunity, because these are the fruits of the Labour of all South Africans over centuries.'

He based his own 'philosophy', he said, 'on a faith in the intrinsic rationality of human beings and the right of every citizen to decide for himself the type of life
he wants to lead.' Botswana valued cultural diversity as a 'nation of equals',
though Seretse hesitated to call it 'a model on which other southern African
societies should style their societies.' What he was strongly opposed to was 'a
pathological belief in the disunity of the human race, the inequality of human
beings, and the concept of white supremacy.'

Once again he appealed for understanding of 'the people of South Africa,
Rhodesia and Namibia' forced 'to resort to counter-violence to speed up their
liberation from oppression and racism.' Botswana might have 'peace, democracy,
freedom and justice' inside its borders, but its stability depended upon
'normalization' of the peoples of southern Africa in a non-racial future.
Seretse was also frank about Botswana's problem with Zimbabwean freedom
fighters, who were sabotaging the railway line just inside Rhodesia to induce
Botswana to close its border with Rhodesia. Of course he had in mind Canadian
assistance to help Botswana take over the 640 kilometre railroad from Rhodesia
Railways.

Seretse, Ruth and the others flew back home on June 16th, 1976. News of the
June 16th demonstration by Soweto students, and the murderous reaction of the
South African police, was in the newspapers when Seretse's delegation passed
through Heathrow (London) and Jan Smuts (Johannesburg) airports.
At lunch time on the 18th a large crowd awaited Seretse's plane on a gusty day at
Gaborone airport. People sat around until the plane appeared over the horizon.
Then a drumbeat started up a group of Bakalanga dancers, who competed with
singing child dancers from Ramotswa, a wind-pipe band of men from Tlokweng,
and the police brass band. Seretse emerged from the plane to chants of 'Pula!' from the crowd. Around the aircraft steps a traditional praise-singer began
chanting an extemporary poem in honour of Seretse as he stepped onto the
tarmac.

A journalist takes up the story. Masire gives a short speech - 'well, short in an
African way'. Seretse moves to the microphone, addressing the people 'in his slow
Sengwato tone.' He outlines the events of his tour. Then he says it has been
marred by tragic news. The children of Soweto, he uses the term ba ba ntshonyana
('little black ones'), have been massacred. He adds his sadness that another
Motswana farmer has been shot dead by Rhodesian troops while walking on the
dry bed of the Ramokgwebana River.

It soon became apparent that South Africa had entered the phase of civil
insurrection about which Seretse and many others had warned for so long.
Botswana braced itself for a renewed flood of refugees from South Africa in the
south-east, as well as refugees from Rhodesia in the north-east.
Seretse spent ten days at the end of June and beginning of July touring the country
to drum up support for the 'One Man One Beast' (Botswana University Campus
Appeal) campaign. Seretse had officially opened the campaign on March 31st. He
had given 30 cattle, while Masire had donated one month's salary.
One of the happiest photographs of Seretse, surrounding by milling primary
school children waving little paper flags, was taken at this time. Then, on July 13th-14th, Seretse flew to Zambia to attend the opening at Kapiri Mposhi of the long awaited 'freedom railroad' built by the Chinese from the coast of Tanzania.5 A mere two weeks later Seretse was himself in China with Ruth and almost 30 others - by far the largest delegation of Botswana officials ever to accompany the President abroad, such was the excitement at seeing and learning from 13 days touring the People's Republic.

A photograph taken on their arrival at Beijing airport on Monday, July 26th, 1976, has a somewhat unreal air about it. Premier Hua Kuo-Feng, between Seretse and Ruth and flanked by interpreters, leads a line of Batswana walking across the concrete apron of the airport with heavy cabin baggage pulling down the straps on their shoulders. The figure of Steenkamp, seeming enormously tall, stands out from the middle of the line. Premier Hua and the Batswana at the front are waving politely, while the stragglers at the back stare in amazement at thousands of school-children surrounding them at a respectful distance, vigorously waving flags and presumably singing.52

The first tour was the next day when the Botswana party visited Tsinghua University in Beijing. Seretse was told how former study time was now given over to productive labour by students and staff instead. He agreed that education should be geared towards productivity rather than the production of an educated elite.

The first official banquet of the visit was at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on July 27th. Seretse entered the hall in a long-trousered safari suit, his wife beside him in a long flower-patterned dress and their son Ian walking behind them in police dress uniform, with a young Motswana woman in a gorgeous long African dress acting as Ruth's maid of honour.

Hua spoke for an hour. Seretse spoke for less, starting by saying that he had so much wanted to visit China that he had asked for fourteen rather than four days to see it. He related how Botswana's borders and air space were being violated by both Rhodesia and South Africa 'in their desperate attempt to cow us into submission.' Making little concession to the ideology of his hosts - except some words of praise for Chairman Mao - he condemned apartheid in essentially liberal-democratic terms, visualizing 'a South Africa which is free from apartheid' and praising 'those little children' of Soweto who did not die in vain:

Apartheid and racism are so repugnant to us that we would still protest in no uncertain terms even if these twin enemies of human decency were practised by any other country in the world. Our desire for peace, our respect for human freedom and dignity and our very concept of human equality commit us inexorably to the struggle for the restoration of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms in Southern Africa.53

The Botswana delegation was the first in a long while which was not presented to Chairman Mao. Mao lay ill and it seemed that Nature itself was now to give a portent of his dying 40 days later. That night, after the feasting and drinking, the Botswana delegation went to bed tired and tipsy.
At 3.45 in the morning a series of earth tremors, of two minutes' duration each, hit Beijing. There was then a massive earthquake reaching 8.2 on the Richter scale, rocking a wide area of north-east China. Its epicentre was 150 kilometres to the south-east of Beijing - in the area that the Botswana delegation was due to visit next. Several buildings collapsed in the city of Beijing and thousands of people fled into the streets.

Seretse and Ruth were kept awake by the earth movements, as were all other members of their party, save one. Festus Mogae, Botswana's chief economic planner, woke up to experience his room's dizzy movement. He concluded that he had consumed too much Chinese wine, and turned over to slumber on until dawn. As a result he became the butt of numerous jokes, in what was to become a very jolly crew of Batswana travellers over the next two to three weeks.

Seretse and the others were most impressed at the spirit of self-reliance shown by the Chinese in rescue operations all over the city, and by the alacrity with which their tour schedule was rearranged to go elsewhere in China. They were taken to Shanghai and then to Hunan province, where they visited Changsha city and the Hunan museum, as well as a porcelain works. Here they inspected clay figurines of Africans struggling against imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism [sic], and afterwards relaxed in a great park with landscaped gardens. They were told about Mao's schooling in the district and were taken to his birthplace.

At Wuhsi they visited the No. 1 Silk Mill in sweltering summer heat. The workers greeted them with tales of their dedication to Mao's thoughts on self-reliance and hard struggle. Everywhere, from trains and planes, they saw vast stretches of green cultivated land, in straight lines or along contours, giving evidence of enormous management and application of labour. The Botswana Daily News was soon to carry an article on the abundance of food in China.

By Sunday, August 8th, Seretse's party was back in Beijing where agreements on technical cooperation and the supply of equipment, much of it relating to railroad maintenance, were signed - to be ratified by a bill in the Botswana parliament two years later. Seretse took the opportunity of meeting the diplomatic corps of African countries in Beijing to criticize the ineffectiveness of the O.A.U. under the chairmanship of Idi Amin."

From the excitement and genuine interest felt by all in China the official party moved on to a rather dreary three-day visit to the Democratic Republic of Korea. However, this is scarcely the impression given by the set formula
Koreans, used as they were to repetitive and cultic reverence of their own 'great leader' Kim II Sung.
Everywhere they went, in offices, schools and factories, the Batswana saw posed and fake-looking photographs of the 4orth Korean leader surrounded by adoring plebians. 'What is that?' one of them would ask in an effort to tease the guides. The Korean interpreters never failed to respond with the set reply: 'That is our honoured and respected leader giving some on-the-spot advice.'

One evening, Seretse and the rest found a billiards table in a small basement room of the guest house in which they were staying. Here was a chance to enliven the tedium of the evening. Everyone crowded into the room and the level of jollity got higher and higher in the excitement of the contest. A North Korean interpreter appeared and found His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana stretched out full-length along the table to the cheers of his compatriots, attempting to deal with an awkward shot into a corner pocket. 'What is all this?' asked the interpreter. Quick as a flash Simon Hirschfeld, Botswana's commissioner of police, replied: 'That is our honoured and respected leader giving some on-the-spot advice. The Botswana delegation exploded in communal glee. The interpreter was still more horrified when Seretse was allowed to lose the game to his juniors.

Flying off on Friday, August 13th, Seretse and some of his team stopped over in Sri Lanka for the fifth Non-Aligned Movement summit held in Colombo between August 16th-19th. Photographs show him making friends there with President Sadat of Egypt and others. Seretse and Machel then flew back across the Indian Ocean with Kaunda in a Zambian plane, which landed at Maputo to big celebrations with dancers shouting 'Viva Kaunda! Viva Seretse!' The arrival back at Gaborone was sober by comparison. The main excitement in Botswana was about the conversion to Botswana's own currency from South African Rand notes and coins. The new Pula was divided into 100 Thebe. 'Pula Day' for conversion was fixed for August 23rd, when Seretse and Ruth went along to a teller behind a glass booth at the Bank of Botswana to change their Rand notes.

Meanwhile the news was of ever increasing war in Rhodesia. Rhodesian helicopter troops had landed inside Botswana in the middle of Maitengwe village on September 6th to interrogate and intimidate people there. Matante was once again calling on Botswana to have its own army. Seretse told a Rand Daily Mail reporter: 'The racial war that some of us have warned about for so long is becoming a reality.'

Seretse flew off to Dar es Salaam on Sunday, September 5th for yet another Front-Line meeting to deal with the Kissinger initiative on Rhodesia. Returning on the Tuesday he was greeted by Masire and the whole Cabinet at the airport who mock-seriously gave him the news that he had been overturned in a coup d'tat during his absence overseas.

Your Excellency, you have always been able to leave this country safe in the knowledge that your colleagues would not plan and execute a coup against you in
your absence. This state of affairs has lasted for nearly ten years, but I am happy to inform you that during the visit which you have just completed, you have been coup'd twice!

Masire went on to explain to an astonished Seretse that he had used his constitutional powers as acting President to award the country's newly minted highest awards, the Naledi ya Botswana and the Presidential Order of Merit, to 'His Excellency Sir Seretse Khama'. In this way Masire preempted their award for the first time to visiting dignitaries expected for the tenth independence anniversary celebrations at the end of the month. Seretse was plainly much amused by Masire's humorous audacity, but was also quite touched by the faith displayed in him by his colleagues. Ten days later at a more formal award ceremony he made his reply to Masire:

It is not the leadership of one man, but the co-operative spirit of a team of dedicated individuals, which has carried the people through the exciting years during which we have all offered selfless service in the struggle to shape the destiny of our motherland. I consider it a great privilege and a pleasant duty for me to accept the honours you bestow upon me on behalf of the people of Botswana.

He went on to say that he was a servant of the people, but added a sudden swingeing rider: 'Dictatorships and tyrannical systems of government are hatched in the minds of men who appoint themselves philosophers, kings and possessors of absolute truth.'58 Perhaps there was some memory of Pyongyang lurking in his mind.

As war on the ground in Rhodesia resumed, the tempo of diplomatic efforts increased to try and head it off. President Agostino Neto of Angola had joined the Front-Line brotherhood at Dar es Salaam on September 6th, to try and sort out the differences between Muzorewa, Nkomo, Sithole and Mugabe. The Front-Line presidents rapidly assembled again on September 25th-26th in Lusaka, and objected to the fact that Kissinger had gone beyond his brief in trying to negotiate with Smith rather than with the actual groups to be represented in a transitional government before free and fair elections. But Smith had, on September 24th, at last accepted the inevitability of eventual majority rule. The Front-Line leaders now called on the British government to host a conference to discuss transitional arrangements towards a full constitutional conference. There could be no ceasefire in the guerrilla war until a transitional government had been established. The British sent an assistant minister to the region, Ted Rowlands, who delighted Seretse with the news that a Rhodesian conference ('talks about talks') would be convened by the British - in Geneva, it was to turn out.

Seretse was busy preparing for Botswana's tenth anniversary celebrations. On September 30th, 1976, Seretse went to the airport to welcome President Kunda and President Jawara of Gambia. A Chinese film crew, recording events for a colour movie 'The Republic of Botswana Advances', was on hand to record the arrival of Oliver Tambo of the South African A.N.C. on the plane from Zambia.
Seretse also went to the airport that day to greet other flights with dignitaries arriving, including President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire - who had obtained an invitation for himself more or less at the last moment. Arriving over Botswana air space in his Boeing 707, packed full with his entourage, Mobutu was told there was no airport in Botswana which could take a Boeing. He was therefore obliged to land at Livingstone in Zambia and await a Hercules aircraft of the Zaire Air Force. The Hercules - which would later go on to Lesotho and Swaziland - landed in Gaborone with Mobutu and an entourage reduced to seventy people. The next largest group of visitors, accompanying Kaunda, was twenty. More typical was the South African A.N.C. delegation consisting of three people.

The Zairean delegation presented logistical problems of accommodation and transport in what was still a small city. The government had bought six Chryslers and eight Fords for the visitors to use: now it was obliged to run to Avis and Budget for more car rentals. As for accommodation, a new complex of maisonettes and flats had been built on the north side of Gaborone for the occasion. They were known as the Red Flats because of their red roofs, contrasting with unpainted metal or asbestos elsewhere. For a couple of days the Red Flats were extremely crowded.

Ted Rowlands and William E. Schaufele, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, came in the expectation of a meeting of FrontLine presidents in Gaborone. However, neither Nyerere nor Machel appeared, sending their vice-presidents instead and meeting with Mugabe in Dar es Salaam. The lurking fear was that there might be civil war in Rhodesia between Muzorewa's African National Council and ZANU and ZAPU. Muzorewa and Nkomo had agreed to come separately to Botswana's celebrations, but Mugabe had declined to come at all and thus had to be met with in Dar es Salaam.

In his hour-long address at the main celebrations of the tenth anniversary of independence in the national stadium, Seretse said that 'Botswana's survival as a nation' depended on making sure that 'urban areas do not enjoy [an] exaggerated standard of living at the expense of our rural people.' The alternative was to 'sucumb to the dictates of greed and allow a free-for-all society.' He also set out his thoughts once again on this 'the most explosive part' of Africa:

We are convinced that there is justification for all the races that have been brought together in this part of Africa, by the circumstances of history, to live together in peace and harmony, for they have no other home but Southern Africa. Here we will have to learn how to share aspirations and hopes as one people, united by a common belief in the unity of the human race. Here rests our past, our present and, most important of all, our future which is at stake at present because of racism, apartheid and oppression.

Seretse was followed by Kaunda, who aroused cheers as he waved his famous, spotlessly white handkerchief, and by Mozambique's vice-president, Marcelino dos Santos, whose 'spellbinding' oratory in Portuguese, rapidly translated into English, enthralled the crowd. Flags of all nations flapped around the small
stadium as schoolchildren, scouts and guides and welfare organizations such as Ruth Khama's Red Cross marched back and forth across the arena. At the state banquet the next night, held in the Holiday Inn, Mobutu handed out Zaire's Leopard decoration to Seretse Khama and his Cabinet. (In return the central part of Nyerere Drive outside the university campus was named Mobutu Drive - misspelt 'Mobuto' for years to come. Other roads were devoted to Machel - the southern part of Nyerere Drive - and to Jawara. Kaunda already had a road named for him.)

Seretse declined to make a long speech, as there had been too many over the previous two days. But he wanted everyone to know how happy he was to have so many friends around him to share in the occasion. Stretching out his arms left and right, he indicated two guests seated as close to him as protocol would allow, whom he called 'friends of all my life'. They were Peter Fawcus, the former Queen's Commissioner, and Oliver Tambo.

Seretse gave Fawcus a role to play in the days to come. Independent Botswana was now beginning to boast the tarred or paved main roads for which Fawcus had longed in colonial times. The main road south from Gaborone to Lobatse had been completed a couple of years earlier. Now, with Seretse and Ruth by his side, accompanied by the singing and dancing of local women, Fawcus cut the ribbon of a new section of the tarred road north from Gaborone to Mahalapye on October 7th, 1976.

Bishop Abel Muzorewa refused to even see, let alone speak to, Joshua Nkomo when he arrived in Gaborone, moving his hotel accommodation to avoid any chance encounter in the hotel lobby. Eleonor Emery, the British High Commissioner at the time, recalls that Muzorewa and Nkomo had appointments one after the other with Ted Rowlands at her High Commission residence, Westminster House, one afternoon. Miss Emery had to distract Nkomo's attention with orange juice and sympathy upstairs, while Muzorewa was ushered out downstairs.

This did not amuse Seretse when it was reported to him. He put his officials to work to persuade Nkomo and Muzorewa to meet. They eventually met in one of the five houses (other than the Red Flats) which had been specially built for the tenth anniversary to accommodate visiting heads of state and other dignitaries. Some accord seems to have been reached, but was immediately forgotten when Muzorewa arrived back at Salisbury airport - to a crowd of 100,000 people, the biggest welcome ever seen in Rhodesia.

Muzorewa interpreted this incorrectly as an expression of overwhelming mass support for himself and his party, which would allow him to dispense with the external liberation movements as allies. Smith was similarly deluded, being persuaded of the value of an alliance with Muzorewa.

On October 9th, 1976, Mugabe and Nkomo announced the formation of a 'Patriotic Front' between ZANU and ZAPU. Links with Muzorewa were cut. Seretse was pleased because he had feared that Zimbabwe would follow the precedent of Angola with conflicting liberation movements. But the FrontLine
leaders still insisted that Sithole's join Nkomo and Mugabe, opposite Smith and Muzorewa, at the Geneva 'talks about talks' set for the end of October 1976. Encountering Seretse one Sunday morning, Miss Emery asked him quite bluntly about the extent of Sithole's following. Seretse replied that he had not a clue, 'and I very much doubt if your people in London know. But no one should be left out.' 63 By pushing Sithole, the Front-Line presidents undoubtedly touched Mugabe on the raw. Mugabe held it largely against Kaunda, but also blamed Seretse. The Geneva conference was bound to fail from the moment, on October 31st, when Rhodesian government forces struck across the border into Mozambique - a perverse form of negotiating tactic also used by Israel and South Africa. Muzorewa was dumped by Kaunda as it became obvious

that he had thrown in his lot with Smith against the Patriotic Front (E). Botswana was inevitably seen as being in the ZAPU camp of the P.E, because of the significant overlap of Ikalanga-speaking people in both ZAPU and the Botswana civil service. But Seretse Khama always made it clear, even while supporting the P. as the effective representative of Zimbabwe's African population, that the choice of one or more parties as government of Zimbabwe must be given to the people of Zimbabwe through elections.

It was at the Lanka Oberoi Hotel in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in mid-August 1976 that Seretse had his chance to get back at Kaunda for calling him 'Primitive Man'. Entering the lobby of the hotel, Seretse spotted Kaunda standing talking to the new prime minister of Swaziland, Prince Maphevu Dlamini. The latter was dressed in the skimpy red cloth or mahiya which had been adopted as Swazi national dress.

'Ah, the Primitive Man; remarked Kaunda as Seretse approached. Seretse looked wickedly at Kaunda and then innocently at Maphevu, remarking: 'Mr Prime Minister, why does the President of Zambia refer to you as a primitive man?' Maphevu, unaware of the joking relationship, turned on Kaunda: 'Yes, why do you?' Kaunda was profoundly embarrassed, and could only say plaintively ... 'Seretse, how could you?'64

Chapter 14
MIXED FORTUNES 1976-78
A cartoon appearing in the Botswana Daily News on September 30th, 1976, showed an extremely energetic Seretse Khama leaping through the '0' of a triumphal '10' - the tenth anniversary of independence. But the leap proved to be more than his health could stand. The gruelling pace of 1976 had been endured by a man strong but increasingly sick. On Tuesday, October 26th, Seretse was admitted for observation to the Princess Marina Hospital in Gaborone, on the advice of his second personal physician Dr M. Ibrahim. An irregular heart beat was detected and it was agreed to refer Seretse to Johannesburg General Hospital for further diagnosis and treatment.
On November 3rd Seretse was flown to Johannesburg, together with Ruth and their daughter Jacqueline. On Tuesday, November 9th, 1976, a permanent standby pacemaker was inserted in Seretse’s chest - to keep his heart pumping if it faltered. The lithium battery in the pacemaker could in theory last up to ten years before replacement. Seretse remained in hospital for a fortnight, receiving visitors such as Quett Masire and all his sons, who flew in to see him. Then on Wednesday, November 24th, he returned home in an aircraft provided by the Anglo American Corporation, landing on Botswana soil at 10.20 am.

At Gaborone's small airport Seretse was greeted with flowers by a large crowd. But on the car journey back to State House, students from the University College of Botswana surged around the presidential motorcade as it passed the front gates of the campus. The cars were brought to a halt by shouting demonstrators, Masire taking the initiative to accept a petition to pass on to the President.

The university campus itself was surrounded by riot police, having been closed on the orders of the Minister of Education. On the day before, the students had demonstrated against the university administration, shutting out the minister in person and jeering insults at him through a tall wire fence. Their grievances were strictly parochial but were given a militant edge by rising political tension in the region. Batswana miners were fleeing back home after four of them had been killed, because of their supposed resemblance to the Basotho, in a South African platinum mine riot; and Rhodesian undercover troops known as Selous Scouts had blown up a house in Francistown over the weekend.

As far as Seretse's friends were concerned, there was no excuse. They were outraged by the students' insensitive action against a man they had known to be ill. There was certainly to be little rest for Seretse either at home or abroad. Though he was well looked after at State House, with his wife in close attendance, Seretse continued to be sick as the operation wounds were infected and not healing well. He once again presented a gaunt, baggly suited figure in photographs, as when he greeted Senator R.C. Clark of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs on Sunday, November 28th. At much the same time he also greeted Kenneth Clarke M.P., a future Conservative cabinet minister in Britain.

Seretse managed to open the new session of parliament on the 29th, with a speech decrying the ‘terrorism’ of ‘trigger-happy’ Rhodesian army incursions into Botswana. But he had to return to the Johannesburg General Hospital on December 1st, to be cut open once more and have the pacemaker leads re-inserted in his chest.

This time his return home went unannounced beforehand on the radio. The only people to greet him were a delegation of parliamentarians, led by the Opposition leader Phillip Matante. They had decided quite spontaneously to suspend their session and go down to the airport to greet the President. Seretse was obviously touched by this gesture, joking with them ‘A ga go a senyega mo Palamenteng?’ (‘Has something gone wrong in Parliament?’).
The backbenchers pressed Seretse to rest for six months and let Masire act as President. Masire normally acted as President in Seretse's absence from the country, with Nwako as acting Vice-President, and it was natural he should do so while Seretse recuperated. On December 13th, 1976, Seretse wrote to Fawcus that Masire was 'being really marvellous' in taking over the burden of presidential work.3

Seretse's medical problems continued through 1977. In a 12-month period he was subjected to major and minor surgery on eight different occasions. His chest refused to heal around the pacemaker leads however they were placed, so the pacemaker eventually had to be removed and placed below the diaphragm in his stomach cavity instead. Once again he thought about retiring, confiding in Joe Legwaila after a period of sick leave: 'I have been saying to my Cabinet that I am a sick man. I do not want to die in office. I want to go to Seleka and watch the country grow from there. [But] They are so loyal to me, they don't want even to think about it.' Seretse's health did not give rise to any crisis of state. The B.D.P. was a stable political organization and the Cabinet loyal to the aims and objectives of the party and President. Cabinet, thanks to Seretse, knew its work and the powers of acting President, ministers and officials were well defined and understood. Acting President Masire did not have Seretse's gravitas but, with the help of the Office of the President, Masire experienced few difficulties in putting Botswana's point of view at Front-Line meetings which he attended in place of Seretse.

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The security situation on the north-east frontier of Botswana deteriorated rapidly from the last week in November 1976 onwards. There were three unprovoked Rhodesian incursions across the border in that week alone. The threat to the stability of Botswana led to justified paranoia: 'There is a general feeling among security conscious Batswana these days" reported the Botswana Daily News on November 22nd, 'that informers from Rhodesia and South Africa frequent this country ... dubious characters in hotels, bars and other places inquiring where refugees stay.'4 Steps were taken to increase the numbers of Botswana's existing paramilitary Police Mobile Unit (P.M.U.), and there were increasing pressures to set up a properly constituted army with greater fire-power. The need for an army had long been part of the opposition B.P.P.'s platform: 'No country can be respected anywhere in the world without its defence force" it had claimed in 1966.1 The B.D.P. had replied that economic and organizational resources could be put to better use, and Seretse had shown that military weakness did not mean diplomatic helplessness. But by November 1975, after early Rhodesian attacks on Botswana villagers, the B.P.P. leader Matante posed the problem very clearly in parliament when he remarked: 'Which is the battlefield if it is not Botswana?' Rhodesia, a country with which Botswana had no diplomatic relations, was sending its forces across the border to attack and kill Batswana, unhindered by any significant counter-force. There were also Zimbabwean guerrilla fighters
crossing the border who, under Botswana's 'no springboard' policy, had to be disarmed and escorted back to Zambia. But the B.D.P. still had fundamental objections to the idea of an army. One good reason was expressed by a B.D.P. member in the November 1975 parliamentary debate: 'the bullet and not the vote' might take the lead in this country.6

In mid-December, 1976, the Rhodesian government declared its frontier with Botswana to be a war zone, naming it 'Operation Tangent' - and thereby giving notice of border curfews and an operational area stretching deep into Botswana. The Botswana Cabinet met on December 17th and decided to seek U.N. Security Council assistance against Rhodesian aggression. Rhodesia offered to negotiate, but Seretse was unwilling to enter into direct discussions with the Smith regime 'when the remedy is so obvious.' All that the Rhodesian authorities needed to do was to respect Botswana's borders.7

Tensions boiled over almost immediately. On the night of December 17th-18th the Rhodesian S.S. (Selous Scouts) crossed deep into Botswana and strafed the sleeping P.M.U. headquarters camp at Francistown with intimidating machine-gun fire. On December 21st, Seretse, with Cabinet support, hurriedly declared the area up to 30 kilometres from the Rhodesian border to be a 'protected' zone, in which police would have unhindered stop and search powers. Botswana's Police Mobile Unit began to patrol the area as intensively as a few hundred men could, setting up road blocks. Unfortunately, the trigger-happy habits of the Rhodesians proved to be infectious: the P.M.U. soon shot dead a 'coloured' person being 'aggressive' with them at a road block. The commissioner of police compounded the situation by calling for new recruits *who can shoot rather than those who can write good savingrams and statements.*8 Thus was born a tradition of confrontation between the Botswana security forces and the numerous Rhodesian and South African whites and 'coloureds' who were living in or passing through Francistown and the northern Tuli Block. Francistown was dubbed 'a hotbed of bitter racialism' in the South African press on December 2nd. Seretse's Christmas message later in the month regretted that fears of racial war in southern Africa had now become reality. Ironically the situation was worsened by the opening of the Nata-Kazungula road or 'Botswana-Zambia highway' along the border on January 20th, 1977, as it was used both by hitch-hiking Zimbabwean guerrillas and increasing numbers of South African or Rhodesian vehicles.9

Three thousand refugees from Rhodesia crossed the border into Botswana in the first week of 1977 alone. In the second week of January, Archie Mogwe took Botswana's plight to the United Nations, backed up by the foreign ministers of Zambia and Tanzania - with further support from Mozambique and Nigeria. Mogwe told the Security Council meeting of 36 border incursions by Rhodesian forces 'obviously to intimidate the Government of Botswana into changing its present policy of giving refuge and assistance to victims of oppression.' The result was the Security Council's resolution No 403 of 1977, adopted on January 14th, which was to send a special mission to Botswana to report as a matter of urgency on resources needed to cope with the threat to security and the influx of refugees.
Mogwe was 'hurt' because, even after West and East Germany combined to support the resolution, Britain and the U.S.A. decided to abstain from voting for it, on the grounds that it would prejudice an early settlement to the Rhodesian problem. 10

British and U.S. concern for (white) Rhodesian sensitivity in the negotiations proved to be of no avail. Prime Minister Smith finally rejected the attempt to find a basis for further discussions which had begun in Geneva. Seretse commented on Smith's decision with a note of sadness at the end of January 1977: 'By his tragic decision to close the door to peaceful

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negotiations aimed at finding a lasting solution to the Rhodesian constitutional problems, Mr Smith has virtually launched Rhodesia on the war path.' "

Seretse had returned to official duty after the New Year. His slim figure was photographed on January 5th greeting a chubby British envoy, Ivor Richards. Seretse and Ruth had also played host to their friend the Queen of Lesotho, Mamohato, in the second week of January. '2

The U.N. special mission, headed by U.N. Assistant Secretary-General Abby Farah, arrived in Botswana and met President Khama on February 18th. As if on cue there was a brief battle between Rhodesian helicopter troops and the P.M.U. on the border at Shoshowe that day. The mission was divided into two groups - one to deal with economic issues and security, the other dealing specifically with refugees. The mission recommended international assistance to deal with refugees - who continued to enter Botswana at the rate of up to 1 000 a week - and the setting up of an army to defend the country. 13

Not the least of the problems was the spread of foot-and-mouth (hoofand-mouth) cattle disease across from the north-east, because of the breakdown of veterinary services in Rhodesia and along the border with Botswana. This was a great threat to beef exports, which at this time constituted Botswana's primary foreign exchange earner despite the abnormally low 'kill' of 1976."4 Botswana was still at a delicate stage of negotiations with the European Economic Community for the continuation of supply to its main export market, Britain, which was now joining the E.E.C. Seretse insisted upon the strictest honesty in the reporting of footand-mouth outbreaks: an honesty which was to surprise E.E.C. officials.

Seretse was sufficiently fit to head Botswana's own mission to the Afro-Arab Summit at Cairo in early March. Botswana was still anxious to secure its own petrol supplies through any Arab oil embargo threatened on South Africa. Not untypically Seretse insisted on being accompanied by Steenkamp to the summit, both because he valued his advice and as a defiant demonstration of Botswana's non-racial citizenship to countries further north.

Seretse flew off to Cairo on March 3rd, a thin faced man with an enormous grin, waving on the steps of the departing aircraft. In Cairo he had two private meetings with President Sadat of Egypt and one with Boumediene of Algeria. He then went to the pyramids with Ruth and the rest of the Botswana delegates. Inside the Pyramid of Khufu, with heads bowed and backs bent in the steep staircase cavity,
he did not manage more than 30 metres. Ruth went the whole 300 metres to the burial chambers, and also went camel riding.

Seretse seemed fit enough as he stepped down on Botswana soil again on March 11th. Three days later he was back in the air, to attend his first Front-Line States summit since his operation. After a day and a night in Beira, during which he and his old friends discussed Rhodesian affairs with Robert Mugabe, Seretse returned home apparently none the worse for wear. At the end of March 1977 legislation was brought before the National Assembly proposing the establishment of a Botswana Defence Force. The proposals were very modest: W company was to have 140 men, while 'B' company was to have between 160 and 180. Mompati Merafhoe of the Botswana Police was appointed the B.D.F. commander, with Ian Khama - who was already on the battle-front with the P. M.U. based at Francistown - as its second-in-command. The appointment of the President's oldest son to so high a position while still in his mid-20s, caused tongues to wag, but it was effectively a wartime emergency situation and he was Botswana's only graduate from the Sandhurst military college in England.

The other problem that Botswana faced in setting up its army as an emergency measure was that both Britain and the U.S. refused to sell arms and equipment without long procedures of official and congressional vetting which would take many months, if not years, to complete. Botswana therefore turned to the ready international market for arms and purchased Soviet weaponry, notably the AK-47 assault rifle, with which to equip its new troops.

In the first half of 1977, an estimated 15 000 people crossed into Botswana from Rhodesia. Most of them were villagers escaping from harassment by Rhodesian security forces. Others were schoolchildren who left sometimes in whole class groups, with the intention of joining the freedom movements based in Zambia. Under the eyes of the international press, the Botswana authorities gave such children the opportunity to return home as individuals and allowed parents across the border to collect them.

In order to justify random attacks in 'hot pursuit', the Rhodesian authorities continued to insist that there were officially sanctioned 'terrorist bases' in Botswana. Cross-border raids and killings in the frontier zone continued unabated. The Kazungula border post, at the point where the 'freedom ferry' crossed the Zambezi, was regularly pounded by Rhodesian mortars.

The two most shocking incidents occurred in May. The first was a handgrenade attack on 400 people dancing to the sound of 'The Breakers' at the Mophane Club in Francistown. The second was an attack on the B.D.F camp at Mapoka by Rhodesian armoured troop carriers and helicopters; the exchange of fire lasted for over two hours. The U.S. and British governments expressed their outrage at the end of May. 18 Seretse was working on his old friendship with Jim Callaghan, now British prime minister. Britain's backing was also essential for negotiating the entry of Botswana beef to the E.E.C.

International press coverage was mixed in its attitude towards Botswana.
Everyday reporting of incidents on the border with Rhodesia was biased towards Rhodesia because correspondents lived and worked in Salisbury or Johannesburg, where they always got the Rhodesian version of events first. Special correspondents were more sympathetic to Botswana, as they travelled freely within the country. Robin Wright of the Washington Post, billing Botswana as 'an island of hope' wrote that it 'may be the most unheralded country on the continent, considering that it recently was judged the most democratic state in Africa by New York's Freedom House ... [a] combination of principle and pragmatism that has brought great dividends during the first decade of independence.' Tunji Oseni of the Nigerian Daily Times was more critical of the level of dependence of Botswana on South Africa and on 'whites': the President had had to go to South Africa for his pacemaker operation, and one of Radio Botswana's newscasters was a white American 'volunteer'.

Numerous South African journalists were taken around the north-east and failed to locate any of the 'terrorist camps' which Rhodesia claimed were there. The Johannesburg Star newspaper said that Zimbabwean fighters moved in and out of Botswana at will. If caught by the P.M.U., they were disarmed and deported to Zambia. Freedom fighters might be recruited for training in Zambia out of Botswana refugee camps, but the refugee camps did not tolerate any guerrilla training on the spot.

British television and print journalists on a tour of the north-east were reportedly nervous about the 'frightfully trigger-happy' Rhodesian soldiers on the other bank of the Ramokwebane River. Increasing numbers of European and American and even Chinese journalists and observers came to have their look and say. West Germany, however, suspended its half-million Mark aid for Zimbabwe refugees in Botswana after the Pretoria-based correspondent of the German newspaper Die Welt alleged that there was 'terror training' at the Selebi-Phikwe refugee camp. Towards the end of June 1977 Seretse was tackled at a press conference in Brussels on the existence of 'guerrilla camps' at Selebi-Phikwe and Francistown. Asked how he knew that the refugee camps were not guerrilla camps, he replied: 'I know because I come from Botswana' When the ironic laughter of the journalists died down, he won the sympathy of the press with the frankness of the statement recorded verbatim as follows:

It is part of my job to know as much as possible what is going on in Botswana. I have actually issued an invitation to you as members of the international press. If you wish, you can go to Botswana and try to identify the guerrilla camps. It is always claimed by white Rhodesians that we allow the guerrillas to concentrate in Botswana and then the guerrillas mount an attack on them. I'll go as far as to say that I cannot positively deny that perhaps at times they do. You will have in mind that we have a very long border and until now it was only patrolled by about 300 men on our side.
On the Rhodesian side, thousands of men are patrolling the border, yet almost every day hundreds of refugees come through to Botswana.
Groups of two or three men can slip through without our knowing.2' Seretse flew to a Front-Line meeting at Luanda on April 19th, where for the first time the five presidents were joined by the leaders of the major liberation groups of Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia - Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe, Oliver Tambo and Sam Nujoma. They talked through Sunday into the early hours of Monday. Then all attended a mass rally on the Monday, where Seretse warned against 'people who often hover around as friends, because some of them are wolves in sheep's clothing.' Samora Machel, for his part, hailed Luanda as the 'historic city where the first shots against colonialism were fired.'22
Seretse's next trip abroad was to London, for which he and Ruth departed via Lusaka on June 1st. Commonwealth heads of government had arranged to meet in London during June 8th-16th, 1977, to coincide with the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the rule of Queen Elizabeth. The Commonwealth secretariat, however, was anxious to avoid any suggestion that the CHOGM was an imperial durbar of colonial potentates come to worship the Queen-Empress.
The three Commonwealth presidents of the Front-Line States (Kaunda, Khama and Nyerere) were as alarmed as the British at the threat of President Idi Amin of Uganda appearing at the Silver Jubilee meeting - though he had not appeared at the CHOGM's in 1973 or 1975. The three presidents were painfully aware that this vicious buffoon fitted the equation - so ardently propagated by white racists in southern Africa - of black rule with murderous chaos. Seretse was also strong on avoiding double standards. If arbitrary government and violent repression were unacceptable in South Africa and Rhodesia, then they were equally unacceptable in Uganda. Seretse had said so in 1975, and had been attacked for saying so in the Nigerian press. Now, in 1977, there was even greater evidence of the brutal regime that Amin was running.
Seretse and Ruth, accompanied by daughter Jackie and grandson Marcus, stepped off a Boeing 707 of Zambia Airways at Heathrow airport on the morning of June 2nd. Jackie Khama and her son were to fly on to her husband Johann ter Haar and their new home in Sierra Leone. Seretse went straight to Guy's Hospital where he was to be admitted for a brief check-up on the leads of his heart pacemaker. It was arranged that he would return in six weeks.
The 1977 CHOGM began with a formal dinner on the evening of Wednesday, June 8th, at Buckingham Palace. Tony Benn, as one of Callaghan's ministers, joined the party for post-dinner drinks at 9.30 pm: 'We found Ruth and Seretse Khama and they gave us a great hug. Seretse is very sick; he looks thin and old and has a pacemaker and a hole in his chest where they had to put a wire to his heart. God, it was awful.23
The Commonwealth heads of government retreated for informal discussions to the Gleneagles resort in the highlands of Scotland, where they agreed on guidelines for a sports boycott of South Africa. Formal deliberations in London then led to the setting up of a Commonwealth Fund for Mozambique, whose President
Machel had been converted into an enthusiast for the Commonwealth by his brother Front-Line presidents. There was also a working group on southern Africa, consisting of the London High Commissioners of Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Cyprus, India, Jamaica, Nigeria and Tanzania, plus representatives of the British government. The Commonwealth leaders also asked their secretariat to undertake ‘a study of the economic costs to the frontline states and of the various practical measures taken by them in support of the liberation movements’. 24

At the end of the CHOGM Seretse was chosen for the honour of addressing the Royal Commonwealth Society at its headquarters in Northumberland Avenue, London. He called for tightened international sanctions on Rhodesia by action against South African sanctions-busting, and expressed his worry that Western inaction would lead to African countries doubting Western sincerity and thus to rejection of the moral values espoused by the West. He emphasized that he was not calling for foreign military intervention.

Two days later he was in Brussels, headquarters of the E.E.C., to meet the President of the European Commission, Roy Jenkins, and to address the Development Committee of the European Parliament. His speech about world commodity prices, buffer stocks and high E.E.C. tariff barriers added up to a plea on Botswana's part to maintain its beef exports to Britain. Botswana wanted more long-term security for its beef exports than a quota renegotiated and renewed every six to 12 months. He also talked about southern Africa in general. The time for peace was running out even for him, and 'I am one of those people who believe that the problems of southern Africa can be still be solved peacefully or with minimum violence.'25

On Tuesday, June 21st, Seretse was the guest of the Belgian government, which was anxious that Botswana should buy the Belgian FN rifle in preference to the Soviet AK-47. After talks with Prime Minister Tindermans at Egremont Castle, and luncheon with King Baudouin and Queen Fabiola, Seretse and Ruth visited the FN factory. That night, at a dinner with the Belgian Cabinet, Seretse remarked how Africa was no longer a remote trouble spot as it had been drawn closer to Europe by the Lome convention. Tindermans for his part was indiscreet about the British Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher, who was gearing up to become Britain's first woman prime minister - 'brilliant, charming and beautiful, but cold as a fish.' 26

On the Wednesday night Seretse and Ruth upset the usual all-male camaraderie of the commissioners (ministers) who 'ruled' Europe. On the Monday, as Seretse and Roy Jenkins were descending from the presidential office in the lift, Jenkins invited Seretse to dine with the commissioners on the Wednesday, on condition he did not bring his wife. 'Oh, don't worry in the least, Seretse said, 'she is used to being treated like that in Arab countries.'

Stung by Seretse's sarcasm, Jenkins arranged that for the first time at such a dinner 'a more or less adequate complement of about 25 per cent women' would be present. Jenkins, himself self-made from lower class origins, was gracious about the noble Seretse: 'a man of interest and distinction, though seems fairly ill.'
But he was most ungracious about Ruth Khama, calling her a 'curiously uncoordinated mixture' of 'Ruth Williams of Croydon' [sic] and a 'Botswana duchess'.

Seretse arrived back in Gaborone on Friday, June 24th, with an exultant cheer to the crowd from the plane door. But he was not quite prepared for the reception at State House by Ruth's elderly aunt, Nonnie, who had come to live with them in recent years. Seretse, according to his widow, admired the way in which Queen Elizabeth II had committed herself to the Commonwealth and to her official duties. But this did not prevent him feeling slightly nonplussed to find that Nonnie had decorated their sitting room in State House with red, white and blue bunting and Union Jacks to celebrate the Silver Jubilee.

Seretse's trip overseas had its benefits in improved international press coverage. The Financial Times of London issued a three page supplement and report on Botswana, describing it - in a metaphor repeated by Pope John Paul II as late as 1988 - as 'an island of peace in a sea of strife' as well as a 'rare African example of Parliamentary democracy in action.'

Accompanied this time by Dr I. Obel of the Johannesburg General Hospital, Seretse returned to London in mid-July for the pacemaker leads to be dug out and reinserted once more at Guy's Hospital. The operation was conducted on July 15th, and Seretse spent more than a week recovering at Guy's. His visitors in hospital included Prime Minister Callaghan.

On the day after he was released, Tony Benn and family went round to have Sunday lunch with Seretse and Ruth at the Hyde Park Hotel. 'Seretse, who is only in his mid-fifties,' remarked Benn, 'looked really old - skinny and poorly.' Seretse was, however, relaxed enough as they sat down to 'a marvellous lunch, and we joked and laughed' through the afternoon.

Seretse told Tony Benn that Vorster of South Africa, unlike Smith of Zimbabwe, was prepared to have 'black majority rule' in Zimbabwe and some kind of independence for Namibia. But Benn otherwise felt Seretse to be 'highly non-political', in the sense that he did not follow the details carefully. Seretse and Ruth told lots of jokes that afternoon, recalling the happy days in Addiscombe when 'they used to go to the pub and drink and dance'.

Benn appears to have been more admiring of Ruth than of Seretse: 'She will be remembered throughout the whole history of the country [Botswana] as the great white woman. She is such a nice woman, with a tremendously strong character.' Meanwhile the Benn and Khama children who were present, Melissa and Ian, got on better than before. Melissa thought Ian 'more responsible', now he was a brigadier. Caroline Benn thought she detected a certain tetchiness with Ruth on Seretse's part.

Seretse was back home in time to open the annual Gaborone Trade Fair on Friday, July 29th. It had already been announced that Mout Nwako, who had been the Acting President while both Seretse and Masire were away, would read the President's speech because of Seretse's illness. But Seretse appears to have quarrelled with the headstrong Nwako, the only man who regularly stood up to
Seretse in Cabinet, over government business conducted by Nwako on Seretse's behalf during his absence. Seretse decided to read the trade fair speech himself. Seretse spoke of Botswana's determination 'to ensure that this second decade of our independence brings many revolutionary changes in the rural sector through research and education.' He also proclaimed the need to stand up against unscrupulous foreign investors and traders who tried to hold the country to ransom. What exactly he was referring to, in making the latter statement, is not known. Seretse appears to have been in a testy mood. When people crowded around to enquire after his health, Seretse replied somewhat shortly that it was good enough to show himself openly.3

In the latter part of August 1977 the British foreign minister David Owen, who had already visited the regional capitals in April, reappeared together with Andrew Young, the U.S. representative at the U.N., on a joint AngloAmerican mission to try to revive Rhodesian negotiations. Owen is said to have remarked to Young that Botswana represented the model society for the future - he later called it 'then the only true democracy in Africa' - that stood to be destroyed by racial war in the region.

Seretse found Owen easy to work with, though Owen's manner could at times irritate the sensitivities of other Africans. Owen, for his part, had 'great affection and regard' for Seretse, as a 'considerate, thoughtful' and quietly dignified old friend of Callaghan's. Seretse also retained some of the glamour from Owen's youth, when a girl cousin had been fascinated by the figure of Seretse Khama. In Owen's eyes Seretse was the key 'moderate' among the Front-Line presidents, whose comments and advice were respected by the British government because Seretse always worked at keeping lines of communication open. Owen also shared Benn's enthusiasm for Ruth Khama, 'a white Englishwoman of quite exceptional charm and quality.'32

The political stress and physical strain on Seretse, evident in his impatience and shortened temper, began to tell once again. When Owen and Young went on to a Front-Line meeting in Lusaka, it was Masire who followed them, as Seretse was resting under doctor's orders. But Seretse bounced back, to make a splash at the end of August in support of Steenkamp. Matante had once again attacked Steenkamp in parliament as the 'Nairobi-born Afrikaner who controls the Special Branch, the army, [and] can say no to any promotion recommendation in the civil service' as well as 'boss of typewriters and editor of the Daily News.' Seretse smelt the rat of deeper discontent in the Botswana Civil Servants' Association and even on the B.D.P. benches in parliament, articulated by the leader of the Opposition. In a 'strongly worded speech', at the opening of a new social club for B.D.P. members, Seretse issued a warning to civil servants against vilification and rumour-mongering in bars and clubs. In particular he made nonsense of the idea that Botswana was 'dominated by one irresponsible Goliath [who] ... will not allow [ministers] access to me.'33

Seretse was well enough to attend a Front-Line meeting in Maputo on September 22nd-23rd, 1977. Botswana was by this time virtually at war with Rhodesia.
Rhodesian troops had massed at Pandamatenga at the beginning of September, and attacks or threats of attack became ever more frequent. The Office of the President issued a press release warning that 'Smith's terrorists are looking for scapegoats and Botswana happens to be the nearest target.' Seretse warned of 'war psychosis' in the region and of a 'white death wish' which stood to engulf Botswana.34

Relations with South Africa were becoming increasingly strained, not only because of hostilities in which South Africa was supporting Rhodesia to the hilt, but also because of the renewed refugee problem caused by the vicious repression of black youth in South Africa following the Soweto uprising of June 1976. While the refugees from Zimbabwe, at least those who stayed on in the northeastern refugee camps, were predominantly peasant people with skills to survive in rural areas, the refugees from South Africa were predominantly urban in origin, as well as young. Those who did not want or achieve scholarships in Nigeria or other countries declined to go to the camps up north and insisted on staying in private housing in and around Gaborone. The South Africans who stayed in Gaborone were also affiliates of a variety of small 'black power' organizations rather than of the P.A.C. and A.N.C.

On May 16th, 1977, the Botswana police searched South African refugee homes in Gaborone for arms, probably to allay South African government fears or threats. Refugees might be planning dramatic action across the border to commemorate the first anniversary of the Soweto uprising on June 16th. The rally held in Gaborone's town hall on June 16th was officially restricted to celebration of African culture through music, drama and poetry. Formal political statements were prohibited - but that could not stop them becoming part of the music, drama and poetry instead.35

The South African government provided additional problems for its neighbours by declaring two of its Bantustans 'independent' in 1976-77. Transkei, next to Lesotho, became 'independent' in October 1976, and Bophuthatswana, next to Botswana and based on the B.P.'s old capital at Mafikeng, was due for similar ceremonials on December 6th, 1977. In Brussels on June 20th, Seretse told the world that Botswana would not recognize the 'bogus independence' of a 'child of apartheid' in the form of Bo-phutha-Tswana. Mogwe was subsequently instructed to back up Lesotho's complaints at the U.N. over South Africa's closure of the Lesotho-Transkei border in a bid to force Lesotho to accept Transkei passports and to recognize that Bantustan as a sovereign power.36

Aware of the need not to penalize the people who actually lived in 'Bop', many of whom had close relatives in the Republic of Botswana, Seretse and Cabinet agonized long and hard. They decided on the pragmatic solution of accepting 'Bop' passports merely as identity documents for immigration purposes while firmly withholding recognition of 'Bop' as an independent state. This compromise policy was announced on November 21st, 1977, and was subsequently reiterated on a number of occasions by Seretse. ('Bop' itself was to await Seretse's death
before trying various power ploys on the Botswana government concerning water supplies and railways in attempts to force legal recognition.37

With war fever spilling over Botswana's borders in the latter part of 1977, the country was no longer a haven of peace. This must have been brought home to Seretse by the raising in height of the State House perimeter wall in 1977, and by the increased security around the President.

Seretse was obviously perturbed at being cut off from ordinary people in Gaborone. But he was able to compensate for this by trips into the countryside to address crowds in towns and villages. On October 18th, 1977, he travelled to Kanye to address the kgotla on the campaign for voter registration. A photograph shows him looking fit and happy in a check jacket, a heavy wedding ring on a slim finger, with hands splayed in full flow to a crowd of 5,000.

When he appeared at the kgotla in Molepolole the next day, Seretse particularly enjoyed the words of a song sung by one of the school choirs - 'modimo o o nko metsi' ('the god with the wet nose'), a praise-name for cattle.38

Two incidents in early October 1977 led to a sharp deterioration in relations between Botswana and South Africa. First there was the rape on Sunday, October 9th, by three apparently drug-crazed South African soldiers, of an eight-months pregnant woman near Baines' Drift on the Limpopo. The three were part of a group of nine white soldiers who had illegally crossed the border at the Limpopo-Motloutse confluence.39

Later that day, 200 kilometres away, four young white males were mobbed and then arrested on a train at Francistown station. They were on their way from Johannesburg to Bulawayo to join the Rhodesian army. The South African army agreed to court-martial the rapists, while the Botswana authorities decided to prosecute only one of the white soldier recruits. He was the 'fast talking' Rene Beyleveld, who was actually wearing military uniform and carrying papers designating him a corporal in the Rhodesian Selous Scouts. The Rhodesian S.S. was the main Rhodesian unit terrorizing people along the border.40

The rapists received light sentences of detention from a South African military court. Beyleveld was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in February 1978. But the sentence was set aside on appeal a month later, and he was released. This appears to have been after representations by the South African white opposition politician Colin Eglin, Seretse's friend who met him for six hours in the middle of March 1978.41

The militarization of Botswana's democracy was evident at the ceremonial opening of the new session of the National Assembly on November 21st, 1977. The B.D.F. showed off its precision drilling - a direct inheritance from the later colonial police force. Seretse's speech referred to rural development, trouble on the borders, and how democracy was there to stay.42 The only underlying good news was that negotiations were proceeding well for the opening up of a third diamond mine, Jwaneng in Southern District.
the agreement being signed in April 1978. The bad news was that, after the
E.E.C. announced its willingness to allow Botswana beef imports in early
November 1977, less than a week later Botswana had to stop beef exports because
of confirmed foot and mouth disease in the north-east. Botswana's Pula currency
meanwhile drifted upwards in value from its original parity with South Africa's
Rand.43
After a quiet Christmas at his Seleka farm in the Tuli Block, Seretse was in and
out of hospital at Gaborone in January for yet more observation.”
The most traumatic moment so far in the history of independent Botswana
followed on the evening of Monday, February 27th, 1978. Rhodesian
S.A.S.(Special Air Service) troops entered Botswana, and travelled three
kilometres along the Leshoma sand ridge to the Nata-Kazungula road. There they
attacked a three Landrover patrol of the fledgling Botswana Defence
Force. Fifteen soldiers were mown down in the unprovoked and unexpected
ambush on a main road well inside Botswana territory. So too were two civilian
youths, who were directing the soldiers to the place where they had seen
infiltrators cross the border. (Rhodesian sources later justified the ambush by
claiming that B.D.F. soldiers who carried AK-47 rifles must have been ZAPU
guerrillas.)45
The hurt and outrage among the public in Botswana, and the sense of frustration
and helplessness in the face of such unwonted aggression, were enormous.
Policemen wept when the bodies were loaded onto an aircraft at Kasane, and
people fainted at the mass funeral in Gaborone - attended by a grim-looking
Seretse, and Ruth in a black funeral veil. The emotions were repeated and
amplified at services in the 11 villages and towns all over Botswana from which
the 15 soldiers came.46
Seretse was appalled at the hypocrisy and double standards of the South African
newspapers, and of the international media which followed their lead. The press
continued to denounce the sentence passed on Beyleveld, while virtually ignoring
the cold-blooded murder of the Botswana soldiers and of the children who
accompanied them. There was all too obviously one rule of media coverage for
whites, and another for blacks.
Almost exactly a month later, on March 28th or 29th, three white men were shot
dead in Botswana. They had been arrested by a B.D.F. patrol, in a small game
reserve at the northern end of the Tuli Block, where the 'Tuli circle' of Rhodesia
juts across the Shashe River into Botswana. It was also near Baines' Drift and the
scene of the previous October's rape incident. The three men had been arrested as
suspected undercover Rhodesian S.S. soldiers, and had been shot dead 'while
attempting to escape'
The South African press went wild about the murder of the three whites. The
British press was even more voluble because one of the whites was a 19-year-old
Briton visiting South Africa, called Nicholas Love. The Star published the
following on April 3rd:
Right now the circumstantial and other evidence points to a needless killing by trigger-happy soldiers influenced to some degree by the official over-reaction to the alleged Rhodesian threat to its security. This is uncharacteristic of Botswana which has an enviable reputation for moderation, democracy, justice and racial toleration ... it will lose its most valuable contribution to progress in southern Africa: that of being a good example of black rule. The Rand Daily Mail added on April 6th: 'Once cited as an enviable example of democracy and improving race relations, Botswana has become suspicious, authoritarian and dangerous.'47 It appeared to observers that elements in South Africa and Rhodesia were fanning the outrage in the international press precisely to bear out the prediction of the Star's editorial. The Rhodesia and South Africa lobbies in London swung into action, exerting pressure on British press and government to condemn Botswana's descent into barbarism and to disparage the whole concept of black majority rule in Africa. Prime Minister Callaghan, struggling with the strengthened Opposition under Thatcher in a hostile House of Commons, demanded that the Botswana government account for itself. Seretse was stung by the attacks. He did not take kindly to interference from a British government telling him how he or his government should behave. There were due processes of investigation and law to be followed in dealing with the case, and he was not as President going to intervene arbitrarily. Seretse Khama was now being blamed in the world press for the very situation that he had warned about for so long, and which he had spent many years of his life trying to avoid. Once again, as he told his friend David Anderson who was visiting the country as the new E.E.C. representative for southern Africa, it was a question of double standards. Just contrast the row, Seretse told Anderson, over Nicholas Love's death, and the virtual overlooking by the British government - which after all was responsible for Rhodesia in international law - of the massacre at Leshoma by the Rhodesian army. Every one of these 17 deaths was a tragedy to the family concerned: 'Where was the condemnation then? These were merely Africans that were killed, so their deaths are dismissed as being of no importance.'48 The regional and international hate mail and death threats received at State House increased dramatically during April 1978. Phil Steenkamp as the 'renegade' Afrikaner identified as Seretse's spokesman in the South African press, was also receiving threatening letters and telephone calls. Seretse offered him a 24-hour guard, which Steenkamp declined. Fears that a mad gunman from over the border might attempt to assassinate Seretse had been present ever since he joined the Front-Line team. Such fears now became acute. Seretse always resented the restrictions on his personal freedom which his office entailed.49 It was a strange coincidence that, at this most depressing time, Seretse and Botswana also received a most gratifying form of international recognition. At the
end of April 1978 it was announced that President Sir Seretse Khama would be awarded the Nansen Medal, a sort of humanitarian Nobel Prize, in recognition of his country's outstanding services to the refugees of Angola, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia. Coping with a resident population of an estimated 25,000 refugees in a country with tight resources was no mean achievement.

Seretse was to receive the Nansen Medal on his return from an official visit to Britain in May 1978. Jim Callaghan, as prime minister, had taken the initiative to invite Seretse and Ruth to London on an official visit as some kind of belated apology from a Labour government for what its predecessor had wrought on them in 1949-50. The official visit was due to take place on May 16th-19th. But the killing of young Nicholas Love threatened to turn sour what should have been Britain's final reconciliation with the man and woman whom British governments had wronged three decades before.

The British continued to push Botswana into an official account of, and if necessary an apology for, the death of Nicholas Love. When the British High Commissioner in Gaborone, in a meeting with Seretse, explained that his government was being pushed by the 'Rhodesia lobby', one of Seretse's advisers present, the Attorney-General, could not restrain himself from bursting out angrily with the words 'Rhodesia lobby, Rhodesia lobby ... where is the Botswana lobby?' (In fact there was a small Botswana lobby at Westminster, with a dozen or so active members in the Britain-Botswana Parliamentary Group, with Lord Alport as its president and Kenneth Clarke as its secretary.) Seretse for his part was extremely hurt that his word and commitment to legal processes were being doubted, and indicated that he was no longer willing to make the official trip to Britain. The diplomatic fat was in the fire.

Callaghan and Owen were anxious not to alienate Seretse from what should have been a voyage of reconciliation. (The unspoken point at issue was implicit criticism of Seretse's eldest son Ian Khama, who as deputy commander of the Botswana Defence Force had actually been in charge of the north-east frontier forces at the time of Love's death.) Jim Callaghan personally reassured Seretse that he would be very welcome in London, where confidential discussion between himself and Seretse would help ease Botswana's relations with Britain. Downing Street put out feelers to the Opposition, through Richard Luce, in an attempt to restrain the wilder elements of the Rhodesia lobby. Seretse also had urgent medical reasons for visiting London. It would have looked very odd to have turned down an official visit and then to have turned up privately.

Seretse and Ruth and their party left Botswana by air on the evening of Monday, May 15th, and arrived at London's Heathrow airport the following day. From Heathrow they were flown by helicopter to the grounds of Kensington Palace where Callaghan was waiting to greet them. The landing was filmed in colour by the Central Office of Information. The official party then transferred to the Hyde Park Hotel. That afternoon Seretse and Ruth went off to inspect the Botswana Meat Corporation's newly acquired cold storage facilities ('Allied Meat Importers' and 'Ecco Cold Stores') in North London.
An official visit is essentially a working visit with limited ceremonial - with the visitor as guest of the head of government rather than as guest of the head of state. Callaghan and Seretse had work to do: Rhodesia, Namibia, British technical aid to Botswana, and access of Botswana beef to the E.E.C. They already knew and liked each other well, so all these issues could be discussed amicably and effectively. There was also the thorny issue of Nicholas Love. Shortly after Seretse's meeting with Callaghan and Owen on the Wednesday, Downing Street issued a statement stating that Nicholas Love had not been implicated in any illegal or subversive activity, that further investigations into his death were being undertaken by the government of Botswana, and that any criminal proceedings considered necessary would be instigated by the Attorney-General of Botswana. David Owen recalls: 'The issue was a classic example of the effectiveness of calm and private diplomacy in the face of public frenzy, with the British press and opinion tailored for our audience jarring badly out in Botswana, already grievously suffering from our inability to handle Ian Smith and UDI and in no mood to take lecturing from us.' Seretse trusted that there the issue rested. According to Sir Peter Fawcus, Seretse was being 'pressed rather unnecessarily and unsuitably to see the Love family.' He declined to do so, as he had not gone out of his way to see the families of the Batswana soldiers killed by the Rhodesians, nor had he met with people abducted or beaten up by the Rhodesians. But Seretse did agree to a recorded interview on BBC television about the general situation of his country in the context of southern Africa.

There were formal events during the visit which Seretse appreciated with an understanding of the culture of the British establishment that most foreign heads of state lacked. He also appreciated the honours bestowed on him. On the Wednesday, after subjecting himself to the interview by BBC television, he was presented with an honorary D.Litt by the City University of London at a graduation ceremony in the City of London's Guildhall. Lord Alport read a lengthy citation of Seretse's virtues.

On the evening of Wednesday, May 17th, Prime Minister James Callaghan and his wife welcomed Sir Seretse Khama and Lady Khama to a formal dinner at No. 10 Downing Street. It was not difficult to pack the dinner with old friends and acquaintances of Seretse and Ruth, now in high places, as well as with eight Batswana including Mogwe, Steenkamp, Mpotokwane, Legwaila and Merriweather. Many of the guests attest to the genuine warmth of the occasion. But those who had not seen him for a long time noticed immediately how tired and worn he looked in his 57th year. Seretse was called upon to give an impromptu speech. Standing up from the table, he smiled gently at Ruth and put a hand on her shoulder, saying:
I am very happy to be here, once again, as a guest of the government of the United Kingdom. I recall that the first time I was invited to London, I was kept here for six years. I hope that this time we can go home when we please.

He enjoyed this tease as much as the others. The room erupted in laughter - some of it embarrassed, all of it affectionate.53

In contrast to the official dinner, the television appearance was a disaster. The interview had been recorded that morning and was aired after the Downing Street dinner. Seretse was put on the defensive from the outset. The lights were hurting his eyes and the agreed ground rules for the interview were not followed by the interviewer, David Lomax. Seretse was no natural interviewee and was inexperienced in the ways of television interviewers, coming as he did from one of the few countries without television. Wearing glasses that turned dark in the bright lights, with the light showing up the stubble on his chin, Seretse looked like some Mafioso.

Lomax pushed him hard, particularly on Nicholas Love's father's request for a meeting with Seretse. Seretse stuck to the point about seeing things in regional context, and mentioned how the killing of his own people was being ignored. When pushed further he said:

I am not suggesting one little bit that a parent should not be concerned about the death of his child. I would be too, if my child were killed.

All that I am saying is that there are very many people including some of my own people who are dying every day. I am as sorry for them as I am sorry for Mr Love.54

Sir Peter and Lady Fawcus and Eleanor Emery watched the broadcast that night in the lounge of the Royal Commonwealth Society where they were staying, and could see how strained and tired Seretse looked. Seretse had already complained to Fawcus about the tenor of the interview recorded earlier in the day, and the B.B.C.'s breach of the agreed etiquette. So Fawcus wrote a letter of protest to The Times. But it was not accepted for publication, the editor directing him instead to the Radio Times, the B.B.C.'s radio and television listings magazine - an idea that Fawcus rejected as totally unsuitable.55

On Thursday, May 18th, Seretse busied himself at the Ministry of Agriculture and with Margaret Thatcher, leader of the Opposition, while Ruth went down to the international convention of the Girl Scouts and Guides. Seretse and Ruth were then the guests of Queen Elizabeth II at luncheon. Princess Anne was the only other British royal present; other guests included the historian Christopher Hill as Master of Seretse's old college, Balliol. Seretse and Ruth arrived to a ceremonial welcome, in the quadrangle of Buckingham Palace, by a guard of honour marching with the Queen's colour (flag), a regimental band, and a corps of drums mounted on horses.

Seretse enjoyed the ceremonial enormously, and was relaxed in the Queen’s presence in a way that befitted someone who had himself been brought up as royalty. He was after all the grandson of a man who had been received as a great
Christian king by the Queen's great-grandmother at Windsor Castle 83 years earlier; and Seretse had grown up with Bangwato regiments marching about Serowe in versions of British regimental uniforms. When Seretse was reminded over luncheon that the Queen would visit Zambia in June 1979 to attend the next CHOGM, Seretse promptly invited her to visit Botswana as well.56

On the Friday, Seretse was the guest of honour at a luncheon given by the Lord Mayor and Corporation of the City of London at the Mansion House - again just as his grandfather had been entertained 83 years earlier. After meeting Kenneth Clarke and the other members of the Britain-Botswana Parliamentary Group that afternoon, Seretse went with Ruth in the evening to the Haymarket theatre to see Ingrid Bergman, Wendy Hiller and Frances Cuka starring in N.C. Hunter's 'Waters of the Moon' - a play about women stranded in a snow-bound boarding-house, evidently Ruth's choice.

The Saturday morning began with a boat trip on the Thames from Lambeth to the Tower of London, the main fortress of the old city, where Seretse and Ruth were treated to a 'knowledgeable and jocular' tour up the Bloody Tower, and late morning coffee. Among other engagements Seretse managed to squeeze in a visit to a dairy herd on the University of Reading's farm and a further check-up at Guy's Hospital.57

Seretse and his party flew out of Heathrow to Geneva on Sunday, May 21st. In Geneva he formally accepted the Nansen Medal in a brief ceremony at the Palais des Nations. He took the opportunity to remind the world of the costs and strains put upon his country by the presence of refugees from hostile neighbouring regimes. He reiterated, as he did every year on Human Rights Day in December, Botswana's commitment to the principle of human rights. (The E.E.C. and other aid organizations were at that time proclaiming that observance of human rights should not be a precondition for aid to a Third World country.)58

There were two traditional praise-poets at the airport reciting Seretse's praises in Setswana when he returned to Gaborone on May 24th, 1978. Seretse told the crowd that he was delighted to share the honour of the Nansen Medal with his fellow citizens: 'If I were not leading a nation that advocated peace and progress like Botswana, these honours would not have been bestowed upon me.' Masire made a special point of praising Lady Khama 'who has stood by you for 30 years or more in sickness or in health, in the obscure confusion of dusty cattle-post conditions and in the pomp and glory of the halls of fame.'59

After a check-up by Merriweather in the Molepolole hospital, Seretse was ready for another trip overseas. On June 4th, he left Gaborone for Boston, together with Ruth and the twins, to receive an honorary doctorate from Harvard University. Harvard kept its list of honorary graduands secret, for security reasons, so Sir Seretse Khama's name was sprung upon the assembly without warning. Most of the students had never heard of him. But a knowledgeable magnum cum laudae graduate stood up to clap vigorously.

Seretse went on to New York to attend a lunch given in his honour by Andrew Young, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Young's speech began by
flattering Harvard for proving itself more than 'a provincial New England institution' by bringing President Khama to Boston to receive an honorary degree. He then proceeded to flatter Botswana among African countries for its promotion of development and lack of corruption in government - 'basically taking on the task we undertook in this nation almost 200 years ago ... [but] without slaves.' Seretse gave a relaxed and remarkably frank speech in reply that is worth quoting: Ambassador Young asked me to say a few words. I said I would. I had forgotten that for him public speaking is a hobby and I have to struggle for words. Nevertheless I would be dishonest if I were not to say that I was terribly flattered about what you have to say about me and the people of Botswana.

If I were in his place, I would be discouraged [about Africa]. I would probably sit back and say that some of the problems facing Africans are of their own making so why should I worry? [As an African] I would think that some of the problems facing us are certainly of our own making. That is why we have now reached the stage where other countries in other continents think we have made a mess of things. We have invited outside interference and, when there has been extensive involvement in our affairs, we then protest and accuse the same people we invited [of meddling in affairs that are strictly African] ... perhaps the time has come when we should sit down and look very closely at ourselves before we condemn, before we accuse, and try to determine where the fault lies, whether it is really due to the interference of external powers or to our own mishandling of our own affairs.60

On his return home from Boston, Seretse was greeted by Steenkamp and Masire with news of a serious security situation developing in the country. The Botswana National Front was said to be promoting disloyalty among soldiers in the ranks of the Botswana Defence Force. Seretse had to lecture a passing out parade of the B.D.F. against promoting sectional interests - 360

and against the dangers of ill-discipline, wielding of guns in public places, and terrorizing the very people they were meant to protect. 'You are the servants of the people; he repeated, 'and not their masters.'61

The opposition B.N.F. had begun to smell possible victory in the 1979 elections in the smoke of battle drifting over Botswana's borders. The ruling B.D.P. had feared wilder elements in the B.N.F ever since the Puo Phaa affair of 1967-68. Since 1975 note had been taken of some B.N.F speeches in 'freedom square'. There had been the threat of 'Tsafendas methods' and the monstrous claim in another speech that the B.D.P. was deliberately killing people in car accidents.62

In April 1977, the B.N.F.'s founder, Kenneth Koma, took over the presidency of the party from Bathoen Gaseitsiwe - symbolizing the triumph of its 'socialist' wing over its 'feudal' wing. (Though Koma claimed the B.N.F. was a 'nationalist' and not a socialist party.) The battle between B.D.P. and B.N.F. shifted from 'tribalism' to recruiting the allegiance of Botswana's youth. The B.D.P. launched a
youth wing under 'Leach' Tlhomelang, a young man whose youthful enthusiasm had greatly impressed Seretse.

B.D.P. strategists identified the training brigades as hot-houses of B.N.F youth support. The brigades centre at Serowe had hundreds of trainees, and an annual turnover worth almost a million U.S. dollars. It was beginning to act like a state within a state, under a troika of managers consisting of its founder, Patrick van Rensburg, and two B.N.F. politicians. B.D.P. knives were already out for van Rensburg. His 'disloyal' Development Studies syllabus was denounced in submissions to the National Commission on Education, which reported in April 1977. Van Rensburg had also been asked to open the Kanye trade fair by Bathoen Gaseitsiwe in July 1977. In his speech he had called on people to rely on their own labour and skills to create rural infrastructure, and to reject colonial dependency on outside 'experts'.

The cry of socialist self-sufficiency was taken up by students at the University College of Botswana. They called on government to reject imported high technology, such as computers, which put people out of work. Van Rensburg elaborated his attacks on 'consumerism' and 'professionalism' by asking who controlled the capital behind them. He and others grew stronger in attacking the 'capitalist path' which Botswana was following. All this was at a time when the B.D.P. government was 'getting into bed with' Anglo American Corporation-De Beers in negotiating the Jwaneng diamond mining agreement.

Nwako spat back at van Rensburg in November 1977, accusing him in a famous headline and subsequent picture caption in the Daily News of being a perverter of our youth'. Other Cabinet ministers joined the fray. Masire accused Koma and van Rensburg of themselves worshipping foreign ideologies. The Minister of Education turned the tables of 'democratization' by insisting that brigades be put under community control. Managers would in future be subject to a board of local trustees, elected in the local kgotla, where B.D.P. interests invariably predominated.

Seretse did not join in the fray. At a press conference at the beginning of December 1977 he was quick to deny that his government had any desire to ban the B.N.F and set up a one-party state. Opposition, he said, was good 'to keep us on our toes.' But the B.D.P. government would not have been encouraged by Koma's call for a 'new African revolution' in March 1978, or by the B.N.F. youth wing's agitation on the sensitive issue of migrant workers abroad being taxed but being denied the franchise.

On Wednesday, June 21st, 1978, it was announced that 17 student members of the B.N.F. were being denied passports to travel to Cuba, where they were to attend an apparently innocuous World Youth Festival. The Office of the President expressed fears that the students would go on for training in subversion and guerrilla warfare after the conference. The Daily News carried lurid suggestions of the 'nucleus of a terrorist organization' like the Red Brigades and the Bader-Meinhof gang 'to assist the B.N.F. and its masters'.

Many observers saw this as evidence that some kind of collective paranoia was gripping Seretse Khama and the B.D.P. government. The London newsletter
Africa Confidential reported unnamed B.D.P. politicians speculating on Soviet involvement in unrest among students in Botswana. Seretse's disquiet received some support from Nyerere and Kaunda, however, when both Tanzania and Zambia withdrew their delegations from the World Youth Festival in August 1978, in protest over irregularities.66

The Botswana Police's Special Branch was put on alert for people expressing political discontent. Seretse's stern warning to members of the Botswana Defence Force gave rise to rumours of enmity between the police and the B.D.F. These were further fuelled by stories of the alleged antipathy between Daniel Kwelagobe, the minister responsible for police, and Ian Khama of the B.D.F., in competition for Seretse's ear.

The tenseness over security extended to government relations with the white settler communities of Francistown, the Tuli Block on the Limpopo border with South Africa, and Ghanzi on the border with Namibia (South West Africa) - all of them containing significant numbers of Afrikaners with close South African links. Nervous about the future in the racially poisoned climate, some whites had become extraordinarily critical towards government policies and officials. Towards the end of July 1978, Masire was dispatched to Ghanzi to warn off white farmers there: 'Those citizens who feel that they are in the wrong country, ruled by the wrong government, might do well to leave the country in peace and seek new pastures elsewhere'67

Seretse followed up his acceptance of the Nansen Medal with trips to refugee camps towards the end of June 1978 - paying special attention to the new camp being set up at Dukwe off the Nata-Francistown road, near the Makgadikgadi pans and relatively safe from Rhodesian attack. He attended the 15th summit of the O.A.U. at Khartoum in July, warning against the promotion of West-East rivalry in Africa. In August, Seretse began new tours of the country to explain government policies to the people in the diKgotala.

In September, Seretse attended the tenth anniversary of Swaziland's independence, being 'knighted' by King Sobhuza with the Royal Order of Sobhuza II Grand Councillor at Manzini airport on his departure. Seretse told the Swazis how lucky they were to have a route to the sea independent of South Africa, via Mozambique. The first two weeks of September also found Seretse in Zambia twice - first at a Front-Line conference in Lusaka, and then at the annual conference of Zambia's ruling party, UNIP, on the great rock of Mulungushi in central Zambia.68

Student discontent, endemic throughout southern Africa at the time, boiled over at the University College of Botswana once again in September 1978. Much of the blame was placed on the current vogue in universities, as much in Africa as in the West, for neo-Marxist rhetoric and ideas. Two popular senior academics, both
black South Africans, were promptly expelled from Botswana for allegedly being bad influences on the students.

Later that month, in his inaugural speech as chancellor of the University of Botswana and Swaziland, on the Kwaluseni (Manzini) campus in Swaziland, Seretse urged students and lecturers - not without humour not to devote themselves 'to the study of nihilistic philosophies and destructive revolutionary dogmas which have no relevance whatever to the circumstances prevailing in your country.'

Seretse returned to the theme in October when he capped the graduates of U.B.S. at Kwaluseni, chiding those 'revolutionaries' who said that Botswana and Swaziland were neo-colonial puppets of South Africa - as 'they are aware the only alternative is suicide.'

'The societies which you will find the moment you leave UBS' he told the graduates, 'may not necessarily fit your academic models or satisfy your idealism.'

Even when they were sceptical of his intentions, academics always appreciated Seretse's humour and thoughtfulness.

Incited by the contrary propaganda of South African newspapers which arrived daily on campus, students at the University College of Botswana came out in strong support of the B.D.F platoon commander accused of murdering Nicholas Love and two others. Sergeant Tshwaipe was put on trial in the Lobatse high court in early November. The B.N.F. also founded a defence fund for Tshwaipe, touring the country to hold meetings. He was presented as a national hero revenging white rape and murder, who was now being persecuted by the neo-colonial B.D.P. government.

Security reports continued to flow into the Office of the President that the B.N.F had plans to resort to extra-constitutional action. Seretse tackled the issue when he opened the fifth session of the third National Assembly in November 1978:

I have always said democracy, like a little plant, does not grow or develop on its own. It must be nursed and nurtured if it is to grow and flourish. It must be believed in and practised if it is to be appreciated. And it must be fought for and defended if it is to survive.

There is an ever present danger that having enjoyed freedom and peace for so long we could easily become complacent and apathetic and think that our democratic institutions can perpetuate themselves without our support and our commitment to their survival. We must not lend credibility to the notion that a nation at peace deteriorates. Like any country we have our social malcontents ... not interested in government by consent of the governed. They are power-hungry fanatics [seeking to seize power to set up] a tyrannical regime which must of necessity institutionalize force and violence as instruments by which it must govern, if it is to govern at all.

He ended the speech with the call for a national youth service (tirelo setshaba) to engage the idealism of youth in rural development, rather than 'shouting meaningless slogans and preaching about utopias of one kind or another. Seretse was worried that Botswana would destroy itself as a beacon of alternative values for southern Africa. There was every reason to suppose that there were
agents provocateurs in the country who desired this. It was evident by this time
that the security services of South Africa (BOSS) and Rhodesia (CIO) were
extremely active in Botswana.
Masire was much tougher in a speech on December 12th, warning opposition
parties that they faced banning if they tried to use violence to satisfy their 'lust for
power'. 72 This sort of talk continued up until the 1979 elections
- by which time it had certainly become an election ploy by the B.D.P. to frighten
the electorate into voting their old government back into power.
The year 1978 ended with a presidential Christmas message from Seretse,
broadcast on the radio and reprinted in the Botswana Daily News, which struck an
unusually apocalyptic note. Seretse referred to the 'brutal massacre of our young
soldiers at Lesoma ... young men who died in defence of their motherland [and]
died for us all.' At the same time he said, 'I think
there is enough reason for us to be grateful to the Almighty for his abundant Love,
Mercy and Charity which he has continued to show us."3 This was from a man
who, unlike say Kenneth Kaunda, rarely expressed an overtly religious thought.
Perhaps it reflected as much his own feelings of surprise and gratitude at being
spared, though barely, from death for one more year.
Botswana was a secular state, but in many ways it began to approximate more to
the European model of 'Christian democracy' and liberal conservatism than to the
models of its neighbours, black or white. Botswana's experiment with 'social
democracy from above, which had begun in 1969-70, had certainly ended by
1975-77. There was still some emphasis on community initiative and control,
evident in the encouragement of community junior secondary schools and brigade
centres - and in the 'One Man One Beast' campaign for the University College of
Botswana. But the central plank of constraint on wages, incomes and profits had
collapsed under the impact of significant national economic growth at a time of
chronic world inflation in the price of manufactured imports.
The newly localized bureaucracy was indeed developing into what Kenneth Koma
called a 'bureaucratic bourgeoisie', and what Seretse feared would be a 'fourth
estate' demanding direct representation of its interests over those of the nation as a
whole through the Botswana Civil Servants' Association. The break point had
come in May 1976 with the granting of a 20 per cent rise in salaries across the
board to the civil service. This created enormous differentials between the top and
bottom scales of government employment, and set the pace for salaries in the
expanding, largely multi-national owned, private sector.
Meanwhile the rise in cattle export prices benefitted a small number of cattle-
owners in a big way and a large number of cattle-owners in a small way,
strengthening the incentive for bureaucrats and salaried business employees to
become cattle-owners and hopefully members of a growing 'national
bourgeoisie"74
Radical intellectuals associating themselves with the B.I.P. and B.N.F. saw this
and howled about it. The gradual hijacking of the Tribal Grazing Lands Policy
(T.G.L.P.), by vested interests seeking land and water for their cattle on
communal lands, continued to be the main issue which exercised such critics of the Botswana government in the later 1970s and early 1980s. Other intellectuals saw the accumulation of capital on the part of a ruling class as an inevitable consequence of, and precondition for, further successful development of a stable state and civil society.

Botswana had by no means reverted to capitalism 'red in tooth and claw" The 'rule of law' prevailed. The state planned carefully and used its income predominantly on infrastructure and social services for rural, as well as urban, areas. There were checks on bureaucratic corruption and commercial exploitation; and there was encouragement of self-reliant policies at both national and local levels. The members of the social-democrat Socialist International who visited Botswana in September 1977 may have been disappointed to find a lack of professed socialist principles, but at least they found an open society and 'liberal democracy'.

The beginning of the end for White Rhodesia began on March 3rd, 1978, when an 'internal settlement' was reached. Smith and his Rhodesia Front gave up exclusive white minority rule, for an alliance with Muzorewa and his African National Council in the ruling Executive Council. But by August 1978 it had become clear to Smith that Muzorewa's support could not bring the war to an end. Only Nkomo of ZAPU and Mugabe of ZANU could do so. As Mugabe was totally unacceptable to Ian Smith, feelers were put out towards Nkomo. Nkomo only informed President Kaunda of Zambia, among the Front-Line leaders, about what was afoot.

Zambia was in increasing economic difficulties. It had been reduced within five years from a dynamic society with a vigorous economy to the edges of poverty and disillusionment. For five years it had been adversely affected by a cut off of all trade with or through Rhodesia. It was suffering grievously from the plummeting export earnings from copper, and sky-rocketing costs of manufactured imports, that followed from the world oil crisis of 1972-73. It was a 'one-crop economy' dependent on copper exports; while its politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen and labour leaders clung to policies of subsidizing urban-industrial growth at the expense of rural production. (Botswana was attempting the opposite: to feed rural areas with mining income.)

Kaunda's government had failed to tackle structural problems and had become fixated on international railway politics. After two years of operation the Tanzania-Zambia railway had failed to liberate the economy. The Zambians blamed the Tanzanians and now looked south to unblocking the Rhodesian railway. The Rhodesian war had to end, and soon, if Zambia were ever to recover. Kaunda therefore encouraged Nkomo to talk to Smith in secret. Neither Nyerere nor Seretse were told, and Mugabe was left guessing.

When Mugabe was told of Nkomo's secret negotiations, by Joseph Garba in Nigeria, he hit the roof. As the news broke, a rain of criticism fell on Kaunda's head. A meeting of Front-Line presidents was hurriedly convened in Lusaka for September 1st, 1978. Nyerere and Machel were furious; Seretse arrived with an
open mind. He found his friend Kaunda thoroughly miserable, even before the meeting. Machel arrived armed with a huge bundle of papers, and lectured his peers for an hour. He argued that if the Patriotic Front talked to Smith at this stage it would be the end of the liberation struggle. Smith was one again bluffing his way to earn a breathing space.

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to reconstitute his defences. Nyerere took a similar view: having destroyed Muzorewa's credibility, Smith was now trying to pick off the other Zimbabwean liberation leaders one by one. Nkomo was present, and spat back at Nyerere that he took exception to the views of a leader of a state - Tanzania - that was not really on the front-line. The jibe drew blood.

Seretse calmed the meeting with a display of cool logic. He took the view that the end, in this case, might justify the means - as the end was freedom for a whole people and not the interests of this or that liberation leader. He addressed his fellow presidents along these lines: The region was in chaos, so what was wrong with continuing contacts with Smith? As Seretse understood it, Nkomo was only engaging in exploratory discussions - and had quite correctly refused to clinch any deal with Smith, as he could have done, before bringing in Mugabe. So Nkomo had not fallen into any trap set by Smith but had behaved quite properly. If Nkomo and Mugabe could now agree on a common position towards Smith, why not press ahead with the talks? Seretse had been told by Kaunda that Smith was at last prepared to talk about a genuine transfer of power to an elected majority government. Why not explore the situation further? Smith was still dangerous, Seretse acknowledged, but there had to be negotiations some day and 'we cannot expect Smith to come forward with his hands up.'

Seretse defended Kaunda against the emotive charge levelled by Nyerere and Machel, phrased in the terminology of early 1960s African nationalism, of Kaunda 'selling out'. But Seretse was privately very critical of Kaunda for having capitulated so easily to Nyerere and Machel - which, as Joe Legwaila points out, left Seretse himself in a very exposed position. The charge of selling out coming from Nyerere in particular, Legwaila recalls, had punctured Kaunda's usual self-confidence. Seretse expressed his annoyance to Kaunda over tea on September 2nd: 'You are a coward. You are too afraid of this Headman [Nyerere].'

The inevitable outcome of the meeting - an agreement that all contact with Smith must cease - was greeted with disappointment by Seretse, who remarked: 'Smith has achieved something today ... he has sown suspicion amongst ourselves.' He left the meeting and flew back to Gaborone feeling drained.

Seretse had had considerable affection for Kaunda for many years. It was Kaunda who had been vital in Botswana's 'outward policy' to find friends in the wider world, and he had always been extremely supportive of Seretse. But in Front-Line matters Kaunda could be too prone to emotional fluctuations. Once when asked if a particular Front-Line States meeting went well, Seretse replied: 'It was a good meeting. Kaunda did not cry once.
Seretse's relationship with Nyerere was much less instinctual and took much longer building. Seretse was impressed with Nyerere's intellect and consistency, but was never overawed by him as people like Kaunda, without university education, seem to have been. Seretse was himself not an intellectual in the sense of delighting in ideas for their own sake, but could readily grasp ideas and their practical implications. David Owen remarks of Seretse: 'Even though suffering from illness he was still on occasions a commanding man when the Front-Line Presidents met, and he was capable of swaying Julius Nyerere or Kenneth Kaunda to his point of view. I was never quite sure what influence he had with President Neto or President Machel.'

The highpoint of racial hatred in Rhodesia, at least on the part of whites, was reached at the beginning of September 1978 with the shooting down by ZIPRA (i.e. ZAPU) guerrillas of a Viscount airliner of Air Rhodesia in the area of Lake Kariba - and the subsequent massacre of the survivors. White outrage was such that it was feared the illegal regime would hit out in all directions at anyone who directly or indirectly supported ZAPU.

Rather than sit back and wait, the Cabinet in Gaborone decided to preempt the next move. On Friday, September 8th, the Office of the President announced that it had been 'reliably informed' of the decision by the Rhodesian government to 'launch punitive attacks against border villages and refugee centres in Botswana as part of a campaign of revenge.17

Further opprobrium was heaped upon Kaunda's head in October 1978, with Zambia's humiliating decision to re-open its border and thus trade and communicate with Rhodesia. This brought Kaunda once again into public and private confrontation with Nyerere. A Front-Line meeting was called in Dares Salaam on October 27th. Machel refused to attend if Kaunda were also there. Kaunda stayed for just one hour in Dar es Salaam before he returned to Zambia. There was no one but Seretse (with Mogwe and Legwaila) to meet with Nyerere. The two presidents spent the day together talking over the situation and more generally, as we shall see in the next chapter, ranging over the whole future of southern Africa.

Seretse then returned home on Monday, October 30th, 1978, via Lusaka - with Nyerere's concurrence - to offer a shoulder for Kaunda to cry on. Seretse, aware of the economic chaos engulfing Zambia, quite understood why Kaunda had decided to re-open his southern supply routes. But he argued in private that Kaunda's timing had been all wrong. Seretse was sure that Smith and Muzorewa were now going down fast, and that nothing should be done to give them comfort. Mogwe was bleak in public about the 'bitter dissent' between the Front-Line States and the failure of the Dar es Salaam meeting to 'heal divisions'. But Seretse was beginning to have more confidence in private about future prospects, even though he might himself not live to see them. The Front-Line States should begin to look beyond the liberation of Rhodesia to the
day in the not far-distant future when an independent Zimbabwe could join them. Namibia might also be free sometime in the foreseeable future. The great problem would then be the relations between South Africa and the rest of southern Africa.79

On the afternoon of Sunday, November 19th, 1978, Rhodesian military aircraft buzzed the refugee camps at Selebi-Phikwe, Francistown and Dukwe. There was widespread panic in the camps at what were assumed to be bombing raids - like those which had killed thousands in ZANU camps in Mozambique. The planes, however, dropped leaflets urging people to return home.

The Rhodesian government, according to an insider's history of the last days of Rhodesia, recognized that 'Seretse Khama had laid down very strict ground-rules governing the operation of ZIPRA in Botswana. They had to be covert ... no arms could be carried ... and ... nothing was allowed which might cause Rhodesian military retaliation as had happened in Mozambique' The same source claims that Rhodesian intelligence had, however, identified Ian Khama as an officer 'who actively and wholeheartedly supported Joshua Nkomo and his ZIPRA."0

The Rhodesian leaflet drop implied that refugees were kept in Botswana against their will. Seretse was quick to ridicule the 'fool's paradise' in which the Salisbury regime lived, as well as protesting at the blatant violation of Botswana's air space and territorial integrity. What the world was seeing was, in the words of a Daily News headline, the 'Last Kick of a Dying Horse.'"369

Chapter 15
FULL CIRCLE
1979-80

Seretse's colleagues wondered where the President, who often looked on the point of death from 1978 onwards, got his energy from. People who knew him agreed that without the love and close care of his wife, who was his constant nurse, Seretse is unlikely to have survived through the last two to three years of his life. But he also had an inner drive pushing him on.

Seretse was greedy for life, and seems to have found it difficult to accept that he was dying. He was willing to endure almost endless medical treatment. But he must have realized at some point that there was limited time left. Hence that note of sheer gratitude to the Almighty in his Christmas message of late December 1978. The determination to achieve great tasks, and to achieve a life rounded with more self-fulfilment, helps to explain Seretse's determination to live a little longer.

One major task was to ensure his country's future with a clean bureaucracy and a B.D.P. government re-elected by overwhelming popular vote in October 1979. The other major task was to help set southern Africa on the pathway to a post-apartheid future.

Like Kaunda and Machel, Seretse had come to see the cancer of racism in neighbouring Rhodesia and South Africa as poisoning social relations in his own country. The struggle for a non-racial democratic society could not be limited to Botswana but must be for the whole region.
The 'inner history' of the origins of the Southern African Development Coordinating Committee (SADCC, reformed in 1992 as the Southern African Development Community) is at present unclear. It is a story complicated by the rivalry and sometimes personal antipathy of individuals associated with SADCC and a rival organization called the P.T.A. (Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa); they had common roots in the later 1970s but then split apart. The idea of southern African unity, of course, was nothing new. The constitution and the very name of the 'Union of South Africa' in 1909-10 laid out ambitions of white settler unification from the Cape of Good Hope to as far as the Kenya highlands. The Republic of South Africa pressed for a 'commonwealth' with its neighbours in the 1960s and for a 'constellation' of southern African states from the 1970s onwards. The idea of the independent black states combining to disassociate themselves from South Africa was, however, another matter.

In 1968 Seretse Khama had expressed the 'hope that southern Africa will one day consist of an association of states committed to democracy and non-racialism.' In July 1974, with the impending independence of Angola and Mozambique, President Kaunda called for a 'transcontinental belt of independent and economically powerful nations from Dar and Maputo to Luanda.' The foundation of regional cooperation in 1974 was the FrontLine States alliance, out of which SADCC grew. The P.T.A. originated as an outcome of the O.A.U's Lagos Plan of Action, which looked to African unity through sub-continental economic communities. From 1977 onwards a 'preferential trade area' for the Eastern African states south of Ethiopia was promoted by the U.N.'s Economic Commission for Africa, headed by the Nigerian economist Abebayo Adedeji at Addis Ababa. Customs and trade officials from 17 African states, including Botswana, agreed on the principle of a P.T.A. in July 1978. Meanwhile Adedeji and Zimbabwean economist Bernard Chidzero got together with David Anderson (the E.E.C. representative for Southern Africa) in London in late 1977 to organize a conference of foreign aid donors for the new P.T.A.

This planning committee in London was effectively taken over by the high commissioners and ambassadors of the Front-Line States and their economic advisers, led by Tanzania's High Commissioner Amon Nsekela and Prof. Reg Green of Sussex University. By about March 1978, the committee was planning an 'aid coordination conference' just for southern Africa, and was discussing the prospects for a solely southern African economic community based on the Front-Line States. Adedeji and his assistant, Bax Nomvete, pulled out of the London committee in disgust accusing Anderson of turning it into an E.E.C. puppet. Anderson certainly became enthusiastic about the aid coordination project during 1978, discussing it with Nyerere, Kaunda and Seretse. It was Green who was pushing the committee towards regional economic cooperation rather than mere aid coordination. Chidzero convened a meeting in Londhd in January 1979 to try to reconcile the London initiative on southern Africa with the P.T.A. idea, but the attempt failed.
It was to Nyerere, as the doyen of the Front-Line presidents, that Anderson and Maurice Foley (formerly Ariel Foundation, ibw E.E.C.) flew at the end of January 1979 to push the initiative further. But Nyerere declined to chair the proposed Southern African Aid Coordination Conference. He argued that he was at odds with Kaunda, that he was too closely associated with the East African Community which had collapsed in 1977-7, and that Tanzania (as Joshua Nkomo was wont to complain) was too peripheral as a Front-Line State. Anderson and Foley may have considered going on to Lusaka to try Kaunda. But Nyerere suggested that Seretse Khama would be the best chairman.4 Seretse and Nyerere had ranged over issues such as aid coordination and regional cooperation in their discussions during the abortive Front-Line meeting of October 27th-30th, 1978. We know that Seretse was concerned about such issues, as earlier in October he had been ruminating in public on how Africans are believed to be pathologically incapable of co-operating with one another.5 Regional cooperation had also featured in Botswana's National Development Plan IV, published in December 1976. The plan had considered the possibility of a railway to Walvis Bay, to export Botswana's coal, once Namibia was free. This is what had in turn attracted the attention of Reg Green in Sussex in his capacity as an economic adviser to SWAPO.6 Seretse was particularly aware in 1978-79 of South Africa's plans for a 'Constellation of Southern African States' (CONSAS), based on the Southern African Customs Union plus Rhodesia-Zimbabwe. South Africa was exerting pressure on Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland to accept Transkei and Bophuthatswana as legitimate fellow members of the customs union, in exchange for improved payment procedures.

The arrival of Anderson and Foley in Gaborone, and their interview with Seretse, were briefly reported in the Botswana Daily News on Friday, February 2nd, 1979. Seretse, however, did not seem very optimistic a few days later, as he commented on the bleakness of the region's prospects when greeting the new (non-resident) Japanese ambassador accredited to Botswana.

Meanwhile Steenkamp, with Cabinet approval, was organizing charter flights to remove several thousand young refugees from the camps in Botswana to comparative safety in Zambia. A Danish air charter company, Maersk Air, was given the contract - for 84 flights - on December 29th, 1978. However, as a result of the downing of a second Viscount by ZIPRA, the British government passed on the message that the Rhodesians would blow up the Maersk plane on the runway at Francistown on Saturday, February 10th, 1978 if the Botswana government did not stop the flights before then. Botswana refused to comply with the threat. So the British went to Maersk and pressured the airline to abandon the airlift. The Office of the President protested at British interference, accusing the British government of 'pious statements' in support of black Zimbabweans while only effectively representing the interests of white Rhodesians.7 Rhodesian forces made a double thrust into Botswana on Friday, April 13th, 1979 - sinking the Kazungula ferry, and attacking Francistown to kidnap 14 ZAPU members. The 'dying horse' of Rhodesia still had a few kicks left it it.'
Seretse was driven to take the lead among the Front-Line presidents between February and July 1979. He was no doubt frustrated by the continuing standoff between Nyerere and Kaunda, and by lack of progress in negotiations over Namibia and Zimbabwe. He was also becoming enthusiastic about the idea of regional aid and development coordination.

The U.N. special envoy for Namibia, Martti Ahtisaari, called in on Seretse at Gaborone on February 6th-7th, 1979, to discuss how Botswana could help the projected U.N.-supervised elections in Namibia. The three Western members of the U.N. Security Council, plus Canada and West Germany, had become a 'contact group' brokering talks between South Africa and the U.N., while the U.N. was in close communication with Namibia's main liberation movement SWAPO. On Tuesday, February 13th, Seretse dispatched his foreign minister, Archie Mogwe, to Maputo on the first step of 'an urgent mission to arrange a summit meeting' of the Front-Line presidents. The first reason for the summit meeting given by Mogwe was that the President was worried that the process of decolonization was flagging in both Zimbabwe (with increased Rhodesian aggression now that 'internal settlement' elections were in the offing) and Namibia (with 'the raging controversy over the report of the Secretary General of the United Nations'). There was also, said Mogwe, a 'second objective of the Presidential errand ... to explore the possibility of convening a ministerial conference on aid co-ordination in southern Africa' The Daily News subsequently explained:

The major consideration in his initiative is to avoid, according to the Minister [of External Affairs], a scramble which is likely to ensue in the future after the independence of Namibia and Zimbabwe when aid focus to the independent states may be determined by the donor countries and not always in the context of the region but as leverages in an ideological or strategic context.9

It was arranged that the Front-Line summit should be held in Luanda at the beginning of March. The meeting, it was generally agreed, would make or break the personal alliance of Front-Line presidents which had become so fragile in recent months. Seretse, encouraged by his newly more intimate relationship with Nyerere, was the only man who could broker the meeting. But it remained to be seen whether his good humour could steer the meeting through to the end, as Kaunda was to be the formal chairman. Fortunately for us this most vital of Front-Line summits, at Luanda in March 1979, is also - as we shall see - the one summit for which there are minutes (for March 3rd-4th) publicly available. The immediate problem facing the Luanda meeting of the first week of March 1979 was that SWAPO was now opposing the very U.N.-supervised elections towards which the Front-Line States had been working. Seretse was in no mood to be soft on SWAPO. Following an intervention by the SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma, long on rhetoric but short on content, Seretse turned to Kaunda and said: 'Could you guide us, Mr. Chairman? Could

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we have the facts? I hope that we can have the facts of the situation instead of being treated to emotional outbursts.’

SWAPO was playing for South African surrender of power, without recourse to elections, on the model of Portuguese surrender of power in Mozambique and Angola in 1974-75. Seretse argued that this was totally unrealistic. He was equally disparaging of South Africa's attempt to put its 'Turnhalle' surrogates into power through manipulated elections. 'We want the independence of Namibia to be orderly. It cannot be done the Swapo way. It cannot be done the South African way.' The people of Namibia should have a free and fair choice of its rulers through the ballot box:

I am not saying that Swapo is not the most popular party in Namibia. If Swapo wins the elections we will say 'hurray" But we have agreed to UN supervised elections and not to the installation of anybody. The meeting illustrates Seretse's courtroom style around the table of Cabinet or Front-Line meetings. He was quite prepared to be abrupt and let people know his mind: 'You must understand, Mr Nujoma, we are still sovereign states and we can do certain things without having to do as you tell us.' But at the same time Seretse the conciliator would preface his more barbed remarks with statements like 'Again I want to be the devil's advocate ...' Meetings were also never dull with Seretse because of his humour. It was a flash of this humour, using a phrase that recurs in his life story, that was to infuriate white South Africans when a transcript of the meeting was leaked:

I don't want Swapo to be blamed for the collapse of the negotiations. I want South Africa to be regarded as the nigger in the woodpile. The question of regional aid coordination was referred by the Luanda summit to a meeting of Front-Line foreign ministers, probably to be held in Gaborone in early April. 10 In the event the meeting took place on Thursday, May 3rd. It seems that Angola and Mozambique had the greatest doubts about the virtue of the venture, mistrusting the 'imperialist' intentions of the main aid organizations to be coordinated. The meeting chaired, by Mogwe, sitting round the oval table in the House of Chiefs, was delayed for a day by the late arrival of the Angolan delegation. No delegates arrived at all from Mozambique, while Zambia and Tanzania were represented at less than top ministerial level. People in attendance included David Anderson, now working for the Commonwealth Secretariat, which was interested in the Botswana-Namibia railway plan as a regional aid project.

For the first time, at the meeting on May 3rd, 1979, it was made clear that the aim of any future organization would be 'co-ordination of the economic development of the five Front-Line States and other independent states of southern Africa ... essential for the realisation of the full potential of the countries concerned and the region as a whole' - rather than simply 'aid' coordination in the region. After a general discussion it was agreed to meet again with more concrete ideas at the Arusha conference centre in northern Tanzania on July 2nd-4th. Meanwhile a preparatory meeting of development experts from the five
governments would assemble at Gaborone on June 19th-20th. Lesotho and Swaziland would probably be invited to Arusha. The question of whether Malawi should be invited was left open for the casting vote of Mozambique. Kaunda still had to be won over to the idea of southern African aid and development coordination. He was being assiduously courted by Adebeyeji with the offer of setting up a large secretariat for the P.T.A. in Lusaka. What seems to have won Kaunda over was Seretse's argument that regional development coordination should grow out of the development of bilateral relations between countries. It was in this spirit that Kaunda flew to Seretse's Seleka farm in the Tuli Block on Saturday, June 2nd, 1979, to revive the regular semi-annual meetings of the presidents of Zambia and Botswana.

Zambian press and television were on hand to record the meeting of Zambian and Botswana ministers of finance, transport, works and information from the two countries; and the signing of a 'permanent commission of cooperation' agreement by Kaunda and Seretse covering trade, communications, technical cooperation and information. Seretse, looking relaxed and fairly rotund in a coloured shirt and white jacket, was photographed together with Kaunda, Masire and Lady Khama seated on white metal garden furniture for their afternoon tea. He told the press 'that the conflict in southern Africa was taking more of our time almost to the point of "neglecting our own interests". ' 12

Development experts from four of the five Front-Line States duly met at Gaborone, once again in the House of Chiefs, on June 19th-20th under the chairmanship of Mogwe. No delegates arrived from Angola; four from Mozambique arrived off the same plane as Anderson of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Delegates were keen to distinguish the proposed regional grouping from the proposed P.T.A., which would operate on the zollverein or customs union model of the E.E.C.

The political ideology and economic systems of the Front-Line States ranged from Botswana's liberal capitalism through to the Marxism-Leninism espoused by Mozambique. All the states had some kind of planned economy. Ironically, Botswana was the least planned in theory, but in fact had by far the most detailed and effective planning machinery. What was needed, therefore, was economic coordination, to encourage mutual and complementary development of production - rather than economic combination in one free trade area, which would reward the biggest producers and marginalize the smaller producers.13

The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) was duly inaugurated at Arusha on July 2nd-4th, 1979. Mogwe arrived via London, and Seretse was on hand to be the official chairman at the beginning and end of the meeting. Seretse opened the conference on July 3rd, 1979, and explained its purpose:

We need to gain mastery of our own destiny in this turbulent region of our continent and we can only succeed ... within the framework of a united Southern African community. I am not calling for the dismantlement of our independent
states ... I am calling for cooperation and unity of purpose so that we can together plan for our future and the future of our children ...
The full exploitation of our natural resources and the development of our productive sectors are constrained by the small markets in our economies, but taken as a whole, Southern Africa forms a sizeable market. Economic regional co-operation would of necessity lead to co-ordinated production expansion which would in turn encourage the expansion of markets for intra-Southern African trade. South Africa in particular would only be too happy to continue to exploit us individually in the hope that we would in time be lured by their economic power to join the so-called constellation of Southern African states in which we would be bundled together with the so-called independent Bantustans and UDI regimes in Zimbabwe and Namibia. These manoeuvres must be frustrated ... we must ensure that the struggle for political independence in Namibia and Zimbabwe continues to advance.14

Otherwise Seretse delegated the actual chairing of business meetings to Masire. Masire, who was assisted by Mogwe, the Office of the President and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, carried the burden of Botswana's effective leadership of the SADCC initiative from that point in July 1979 onwards. The South African government rightly saw the rapid emergence of SADCC as a threat to COSAS; and set out to discredit it and Seretse Khama in particular. The weapon of choice was a South African newspaper with a wide distribution outside South Africa, including Botswana. The ammunition came in the form of a transcript of the March 1979 Front-Line summit at Luanda, which the South African government had apparently obtained via U.N. sources in New York or Lusaka.5

A report of the Luanda meeting was published in the Johannesburg Sunday Times on May 20th, 1979, under the banner headline 'I Want SA to be the Nigger in the Woodpile'. The South African transcript was stylistically slightly at variance with the minutes of the meeting as held by the Office of the President in Gaborone. Thus the South African version has Seretse saying 'If Swapo wins the elections, we will all be thrilled', while the Botswana version has him saying '... we will say "hurray"'. 'Archie Mogwe's response to the Sunday Times report was therefore that the report was 'accurate but twisted'.

Pik Botha, the South African foreign minister, attempted to make capital out of President Seretse Khama's supposed insult. He strongly objected to Seretse calling White South Africa the 'nigger in the woodpile'. 16 But the attempt to manufacture a diplomatic incident out of a private witticism, as South African newspapers openly acknowledged, simply made the South African government look ridiculous.)7

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Speculation about the future leadership of Botswana in foreign publications such as Africa Confidential had centered on the figure of Seretse Khama's oldest son Ian, entertaining the idea of dynastic succession to the republic's presidency. One of the foreigners who assumed that Ian would become president after his father was Tony Benn. Caroline Benn had detected a certain tension within the Seretse Khama family in London in July 1977. She told her husband that 'she sensed a slight resentment' on the part of Seretse: 'Ruth spoke about Ian all the time and Ian would answer all the questions. Seretse would say, 'Let me answer that,' and Ruth would insist on Ian answering. Tony Benn remarked in his diary: 'Seretse is proud of his son but he feels that he is being pushed a bit to one side.'

Ian Khama was installed as Kgosi Khama IV of the Bangwato at Serowe on Saturday, May 5th, 1979, at the age of 26. History had turned full circle, as his installation reasserted after 30 years the undoubted hereditary right of Seretse Khama's descendants to the Bangwato royal succession.

Bangwato had been agitating for Ian's installation as kgosi since Rasebolai Kgamane had died and Tshekedi's two elder sons, Leapeetswe and Sekgoma, had both abandoned the position of Tribal Authority or acting kgosi for good. The Bangwato in the Serowe kgotla first appealed for Ian as kgosi in February-March 1975. Mokgacha Mokgadi, an efficient administrator but no royal, was appointed as 'Tribal Authority in April 1975, but the Bangwato wanted a real, substantive kgosi from the royal line. Ian's personal objection to assuming kgosi was that he had a good career in the Botswana Defence Force which was of greater importance both to himself and to his whole country. In November 1977 President Khama announced in the Serowe kgotla that Ian would eventually be installed as kgosi, the compromise being that Mokgacha Mokgadi would continue as Tribal Authority to act on Ian's behalf in everyday administration. 

Lady Khama seems to have been happier with the notions of royalty and aristocracy than Sir Seretse, who had actually been born to the purple. He continued to disparage 'tribal' rites as retrograde and traditional kgosi as autocracy, and it appears to have been with some reluctance that he was persuaded by the Bangwato elders of the lingering ritual and symbolic value of 'tribal' chieftainship. Seretse surprised many people at the installation of Kgosi Khama IV by a speech on the dangers of 'tribalism, warning his son that if he was inefficient he would be deposed by the President. He told the Bangwato he was installing Ian to show that he, Seretse, harboured no personal claim to rule them as kgosi.

There is no reason to suppose that the idea of a hereditary presidency of the Republic of Botswana was ever entertained by Seretse. It would have been a negation of the democratic principle in national government for which he had stood for so many years. Anyway, the M.P.s of the ruling party, whose constitutional duty it was to pick the president, would not have stood for it. Seretse continued to go to work at the Office of the President, next to the ministries and parliament, every day that he could in 1979. But illness kept him
increasingly at State House, nursed by his wife, drawing him into the bosom of his immediate family and making him more remote from his political colleagues. Stories began to circulate about a tussle, accompanied by increasing animosity, for Seretse's body and soul between Quett Masire and Ruth Khama. Masire and his Cabinet colleagues counted the cost of losing this tussle as the price they gladly paid for the survival of Seretse. Hence Masire's fulsome praise for Lady Khama at Gaborone airport when she and Seretse arrived back from London in May 1978. Symbolically this tussle can be represented as the pull on Seretse by Government in one direction and by Family in another. Ian was first and foremost part of Family. At least one permanent secretary was heard to complain that his ministry was starved of funds, while the Botswana Defence Force was over-supplied with new toys such as light aircraft and armoured personnel carriers, because the deputy-commander of the B.D.F. lunched every day with the President. There were similar complaints that too much money was allocated to the refurbishment of State House because of Lady Khama's influence on Seretse. She was well known for her sharp responses when such criticisms were uttered within ear-shot.

Seretse was now continuously under strict medication and forbidden to drink alcohol or eat rich and exotic foods. He missed gossip with friends and relatives at parties in town and on trips into the countryside. His colleagues feared that the Setswana side of his character was being suppressed by the totally English language environment and culture of his wife and nuclear family. But Seretse continued to preside over Cabinet when he could, and was kept in touch with administrative matters by his most trusted officials in the Office of the President. His cousin and closest friend from childhood through to the early 1960s in Serowe, Lenyeletse Seretse, was also now a member of Cabinet and living in Gaborone, and spent much time at State House. Seretse continued to talk, discuss and listen, and to sit on the sidelines and watch the dancing when he could. The odd packet of dried phane worms or other traditional delicacies was no doubt smuggled into his pocket.

An admiring profile of Lady Khama as 'Mmabatho/Mother of a Nation', by a young woman journalist, appeared in the July-August 1978 edition of the magazine Kutlwano. It concluded that 'today she is the best nurse of President Khama. Lady Khama for sure is a tough lady.' Observations on Lady Khama's 'tremendously strong character' were commonplace. What they did not recognize was the loving individual behind the somewhat brittle public facade. Those who got to know her well recognized qualities of concern and compassion which made her, in the words of Tony Benn, *such a nice woman'.

David Anderson, who had known Kwame Nkrumah as the 'prisoner of Christenborg' during his latter days as president of Ghana, contrasted Seretse's relationship of private equality with his wife with that of the ageing Nkrumah and his totally domineering wife.22 Seretse and Ruth had made great sacrifices to marry each other 30 years before. Friends and associates conceded their right to privacy in Seretse's last years.
Together Seretse and Ruth planned for the future of the family. As it was, Ruth had taken a leading role in the everyday financial management of the family property for many years. Now they began to divest themselves of their farm and cattle holdings in the north, including provision for laying off the retinue of traditional family retainers. They concentrated their land holding in their small farm at Odi just north of Gaborone, which would be their retirement home, and invested in stocks and shares rather than cattle for the future. But these processes were gradual and had not been completed by the time that Seretse Khama died.

At least one person at Kgosi Khama IV's installation in the Serowe kgotla in May 1979 had no reason to be happy. This was Peto Sekgoma, Seretse's 'uncle' and erstwhile agent in the 1950s, whose eldest son was due to come up for trial on Monday, May 7th. It is noteworthy that the official photograph of Ian Khama which appeared in the Daily News before his installation included his 'uncles' Keaboka and Radiphofu but not Peto.23

Observers wondered if there was not some lingering malice on Seretse's part in making an example of Peto's son. The court case dragged on from May into June, but the only evidence offered was of misuse of government vehicles and fraudulent claiming of mileage allowances. It was hardly a grand scandal but was obviously an attempt by the Office of the President to highlight and stamp out corruption in the upper ranks of the bureaucracy before it spread. Peto's son was a deputy permanent secretary.

Attention had been turned to corruption in high places by the suicide of the Minister of Mineral Resources towards the end of 1976. This coincided with stories in the press and elsewhere about the smuggling of diamonds from Orapa through to dealers in Lesotho.24 The Daily News also carried stories periodically about corruption among expatriate businessmen and technical officers - mainly British or white South Africans.25

Seretse was determined not to be thought soft on the question of corruption. He did not approve when colleagues delayed paying their debts indefinitely. At the time of his death Seretse was said to be hot on the trail of a senior office holder, who had been shown in court to be guilty of trickery, if not actual fraud. Seretse was aware that with increasing prosperity in Botswana there were increasing opportunities for corrupt dealings. (South African and multinational companies had also become accustomed to practices counted corrupt in Botswana but not in South Africa and elsewhere.)

An underlying source of tension was the under-representation of indigenous Batswana in business management and ownership. Batswana entrepreneurs expressed their resentment at the immigration of South African business people, of white and Indian origin, to take advantage of new business opportunities in Botswana. Kgosi Seepapitso IV of the Bangwaketse made it his business to attack the immigration of Indians in particular.26

Apart from the Arusha founding conference of SADCC in early July 1979, Seretse spent much of the month in political campaigning for the October elections and in preparing for the state visit of Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain,
who would be en route to the Commonwealth heads of government meeting to be held in Zambia.
It was the Queen's second visit to Botswana - her first having been with her parents on April 17th, 1947. King George VI had come as an imperial sovereign to a colony or 'protectorate'; now Queen Elizabeth II was to come as a foreign country's head of state to an independent sovereign state, as well as in her personal capacity as Head of the Commonwealth. Seretse was pleased to be able to return the Queen's hospitality in London, and to have the chance to show off the changes achieved since independence. Ruth, as a former Briton conditioned to deference, looked forward to the visit with somewhat greater trepidation. Seretse had to remind her that as the wife of Botswana's head of state she actually had precedence over the

Queen at all formal events within Botswana's borders and would walk in front of her and not behind.
The burden of supervising the redecoration, replumbing and general refurbishment of State House, fit for visiting royalty, fell upon Lady Khama. Whilst work was in progress, the Khamas moved out to stay on their farm just north of Gaborone. News came of attempts in Britain to stop the Queen visiting Africa at all. So long as the Queen was in Britain she was subject to the sovereignty of parliament, and therefore to the whim of Margaret Thatcher, the new Conservative prime minister. But Seretse remained confident that the Queen would win through as an individual and insist on going to Africa to perform her functions as Head of the Commonwealth.
Queen Elizabeth began her state visit on Wednesday, July 25th, 1979, when her plane from Malawi landed at 4.20pm. Together with her husband Prince Philip and their second son Prince Andrew she received an enthusiastic welcome and a 21-gun salute. Seretse was occasionally to disconcert her by holding on to her hand in the lingering fashion characteristic of good friends in Africa. This schoolboyish display of affection and excitement amused bystanders aware of this minor clash of cultures.
Shortly after her arrival, the Queen invested Seretse with his second knighthood, as Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath (G.C.B.). It was the highest honour that Britain could bestow on a foreigner, in an order of chivalry that was third in precedence after the Garter and the Thistle at the British royal court. Its ranks included people such as Winston Churchill. Seretse almost forgot to wear the insignia of this new decoration at the official banquet that night. His wife had to send him back upstairs at State House to put it on.
The banquet was held in the Holiday Inn (later Gaborone Sun) hotel, the only place in Gaborone with the space and facilities for it. Seretse's speech of welcome praised the Queen's personal courage in coming to the region. He expressed his fear that Botswana's 'harmonious and stable racial and socio-political order ... may be destroyed by the political turmoil around us.'
Queen Elizabeth began by recalling her previous, one-day visit in 1947, four days before her 21st birthday, and the help that Botswana had rendered Britain in the
Second World War. She talked of the help Britain was giving Botswana to tackle problems arising from 'the suffering across your borders' - an oblique reference to Rhodesia and South Africa. ('Pole-cat' countries where the visit received enormous press attention, jealous of the fact that in 1947 they had been the main destinations of the royal visit but were now being boycotted by the royal family.) Finally she remarked on Botswana's post-independence rags to riches story: 'Perhaps it [is] because of your experience of adversity that you have been able to handle your growing prosperity so well.' 28

The next two days were crowded with the excitement of many events at which Seretse accompanied the Queen. A particularly honoured guest at the State House garden party was an old peasant farmer from the small village of Malolwane who had sent a bag of corn each to the Queen and to the President. Queen Elizabeth presented to the National Museum the great fur kaross sewn by Bangwato craftworkers and given to her father in 1947. On the Thursday she opened the Gaborone trade fair with a cry of 'Pula!' 29 Seretse was completely exhausted by the time his royal guests departed, around midday on Friday, July 27th. It may all have seemed worthwhile when he received a very warm message of thanks from the Queen after the visit. The letter was published in the Botswana Daily News.30 But Seretse never really recovered from the exertions of the royal visit; and it seems to have marked a watershed in his health, which from then on slipped ever downward.

There were unexpected reasons for stress. In a region of the world where hot taps are too often marked blue or green and cold taps red, it was the hastily installed plumbing that gave most problems at State House. The Queen had been unable to obtain a reliable supply of hot water in her private bathroom. On the night after her departure, Seretse got up to find water flooding over the upstairs landing and down the main staircase at State House. Twenty-four hours earlier it would have been a disaster and a major embarrassment for both Ruth and Seretse.

Seretse followed Queen Elizabeth to Lusaka on Monday, July 29th, first to attend a summit of the Front-Line States (including Mozambique and Angola, the non-Commonwealth members) and then to attend the Commonwealth heads of government meeting. There was a feeling of international détente in the air: a photograph of the Soviet and U.S. heads of state, Brezhnev and Carter, enthusiastically kissing to celebrate strategic arms limitation, had been splashed across the world's newspapers a month earlier.

The 1979 CHOGM at Lusaka proved to be the most historic ever, since it was there and then that the future of Zimbabwe was hammered out. Margaret Thatcher came to the meeting determined to recognize the Smith-Muzorewa government of 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Seretse had made it clear to Britain before the CHOGM that it would be playing with fire if it were to recognize the Smith-Muzorewa regime and lift sanctions. Thatcher had 'little respect for ... the bullying attitude' of either Kaunda or Nyerere.31 Whether she had more respect for Seretse's views is not known. He was not well and missed many sessions.
As usual among the heads of government, Seretse had been allocated a topic to introduce at one of the sessions of the CHOGM. When his turn came he was too sick to do so. But he struggled to have some part in the absolutely vital dealings, involving Kaunda, Nyerere, Malcolm Fraser and the Queen herself, which eventually persuaded Margaret Thatcher to go for a new constitutional settlement which included the Patriotic Front of Nkomo's ZAPU and Mugabe's ZANU.32

Seretse returned home to Botswana on Wednesday, August 8th, 1979, cheered by the extraordinary progress made at the Lusaka CHOGM. Only a month before he had seen no hope for the 'bleeding' land of Zimbabwe. However, the Rhodesian S.S. or S.A.S. celebrated the end of the Commonwealth conference with an extremely vicious, if minor attack on Francistown, cutting the throat of the night-watchman at the local library and bringing in helicopter gunships to threaten the B.D.F.33

Seretse tried to throw himself into a series of presidential tours of the country. The general election was announced for October 20th and Seretse went to speak at Lobatse and Good Hope in the south-east and at Orapa and Lethakane in Central District. At Lethakane, the new diamond mine near Orapa, an estimated 10 000 people turned out to greet him and to hear him urge national unity, and the avoidance of tribal factionalism and destructive revolution. He urged people not to throw the country to the wolves' by voting B.N.F.34

The B.D.P. had decided to play on people's fears of a B.N.F. victory leading to domestic unrest. Seretse had directly addressed this issue to the voters of Bathoen's Kanye stronghold in the middle of June, warning them of the B.N.F.'s desire for 'destructive revolution'.3 He had then told the annual conference of the B.D.P., at Gaborone on July 7th, that 'some of the opposition parties may be heading for extinction because they have nothing to offer the people of Botswana other than chaos and instability.' Kenneth Koma had hit back with a telling point: 'The B.D.P. government has been saying that it needs a strong opposition. Now that this kind of opposition exists, they are going around telling people about what they call "destructive revolution".' But Koma punctured his case by telling his supporters that no opposition party had ever come to power in Africa as a result of a general election.36 This gave back to the B.D.P. the stick with which to beat the B.N.F. for its supposed commitment to violence.

This strenuous style of political campaigning proved once again too much for Seretse's health. By April 21st, 1979, he was back in the Scottish Livingstone Memorial Hospital at Molepololo, for a 'rest and checkup' under Dr Merriweather's care.37 Seretse then resumed political campaigning at a more moderate pace. He continued to be scathing about the 'self-styled intellectuals [of the B.N.F.] who are busy brainwashing the people with conflicting attitudes borrowed from other countries' but his views on other opposition party politicians had mellowed.
Motsamai Mpho of the B.I.P. recalls meeting Seretse on the electoral trail in Ngamiland. When Mpho cheekily addressed him as Kgosi or 'Chief', Seretse replied in good measure by calling him Motlhanka or 'Slave'. Lady Khama recalls that Seretse had long thought Mpho to be 'a gentleman'. Seretse was also drawn closer by mutual health problems to his old sparring partner, Phillip Matante of the B.P.P. Matante was admitted to the Princess Marina Hospital at Gaborone in May 1979 suffering from a terminal illness. He was so delighted when Seretse visited him in hospital soon afterwards that he publicly thanked him for doing so.

Relations with Kenneth Koma and Bathoen Gaseitsiwe of the B.N.F. were much more problematic. Seretse had known both for many years, Koma as a wayward junior and Bathoen as an admonishing senior. His relationship with the two men continued to be tense. Lady Khama suggests that there was a kind of nervous energy radiating around Koma that kept anyone from approaching too close. Ideologically, of course, Seretse and Koma were poles apart, but that had not prevented Seretse from becoming good friends with Kaunda, Nyerere and Machel or with Tambo and Chitepo in the liberation movements.

The B.D.P. government's exaggerated campaign against the B.N.F. underscored a certain nervousness in governing circles about the inevitable demise of Seretse Khama as their leader. On the face of things there were no problems of succession. Quett Masire was already more than half way into the duties and responsibilities of presidency - including attending those Front-Line meetings which Seretse had to miss due to illness. But Masire lacked Seretse's gravitas and was regarded as a self-made man who would not easily assume the dignity of the full presidency, and who would be subject to the continuing disparagement of people such as Bathoen Gaseitsiwe, his former Kgosi.

Seretse's election campaigning was interrupted by news of the death of President Neto of Angola. Seretse flew to Luanda to attend the funeral, and resumed electioneering once again on his return from Angola on the night of September 17th. On the nomination day for electoral candidates, Friday, September 21st, only the B.D.P. and the B.N.F. fielded presidential candidates.

On October 17th, Seretse flew to a meeting of Front-Line presidents in Dar es Salaam, where he gave broad support to the proposals of Lord Carrington, Britain's foreign minister, for Rhodesian-Zimbabwean constitutional negotiations. Kaunda and Machel were more critical. But the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe accepted Carrington's proposals on the 18th.

The victory of the Botswana Democratic Party in the general election of October 20th, 1979, was gratifyingly large for Seretse. The B.D.P. had lost two seats to the B.N.F. but had gained Matante's Francistown seat from the B.P.P. The Democratic Party still took three-quarters of the votes but what really satisfied the government was that the turn-out of voters had almost doubled from the number who voted in the 1974 elections, when the low turn-out had
mocked the B.D.P.’s claim to represent the majority of Batswana. There was an intensive campaign to get people to vote in 1979. Newspapers and billboards were festooned with cartoons of a trousered and somewhat louche rabbit, not unlike Bugs Bunny, standing with hands spread out and saying to people ‘He! monna, tsoga!’ (‘Hey! man, get up!’) and that it was no problem (‘No-Mathata’ in Setswana-English argot) to vote.

Phillip Matante died in Gaborone on the last day of October, being buried at Francistown on the first Sunday in November. The end was also coming nearer for Seretse. On November 15th, 1979, he was flown to London with Ruth for what was described as ‘a ten day check-up’ - though he was to be away for three weeks.

The journey to London was a nightmare. British Airways was in the habit of boarding its international transit passengers at Johannesburg airport after local South African passengers had taken their seats. When Seretse and Ruth entered the first-class cabin they found their pre-booked seats already occupied. No amount of persuasion could move the cabin crew to find first-class seats, where Seretse - now in some degree of pain - could stretch out and sleep. Instead, over Ruth’s protests, they were placed cramped up in economy or excursion class seats. Seretse, who was a large man but brave in facing pain, philosophically accepted the situation. He may have reflected on the irony of his reduction once more to commoner status by the British, with hints of racism against him and Ruth as a 'mixed' couple.

Ruth vowed that Seretse would never fly BA again; and insisted on South African Airways for the return flight. SAA had the nous to treat him as a sick man in the first-class cabin, as well as giving him the protocol due to a head of state. The South Africans may also have known or guessed that President Khama had received confirmation in London that he was dying.

Seretse, though in London, was not well enough to attend the constitutional talks on Rhodesia at Lancaster House, off Pall Mall, which continued until December 15th. Joseph Legwaila of the Office of the President attended the talks as an observer and kept Seretse fully informed in his London sickbed until Seretse and Ruth flew home in the second week of December.

Nor was Seretse then well enough, back in Botswana, to attend the meetings of Front-Line presidents, held in various southern African countries to deal with implementation of the Lancaster House agreement. Masire attended them on his behalf, with full powers to wheel and deal. As for Cabinet in Gaborone, its members were not unduly alarmed by Seretse's condition. They were used to the idea that their president was a sick man, and felt that he had merely once more over-stretched himself during the election campaign, and needed time to recover. Quett Masire continued as Acting President of the Republic from November 13th, 1979, through to February 19th, 1980.

On returning from London Seretse spent a few days in a private ward at the Molepolole hospital under the watchful eye of Dr Merriweather; he also returned
there over the Christmas and New Year period. The stay was more in the nature of a rest cure away from the cares of state than a strict medical necessity. Merriweather encouraged him to walk about, and Seretse found time to visit people and historic sites in and around Molepolole, on foot. Merriweather recalls that he was asked by a sick and elderly Mosarwa (Bushman) in the public ward if he could go and greet his president. When Seretse heard of the request, his response was, 'I'll go and visit him.' Seretse came into the public ward and talked to all the patients, paying particular attention to the elderly Mosarwa. Seretse delighted in making others feel that their lives were worthwhile.42

Unlike his speech for the 13th anniversary of Botswana's independence on September 30th, 1979 - a message of gloom and doom due to drought and foot-and-mouth - Seretse's Christmas 1979 address to the nation struck an optimistic note. There was joy that 'Peace in Rhodesia is also peace for Botswana'. Botswana had lifted all sanctions against Rhodesia on December 21st because of the ceasefire. He told the public that he was 'not very ill' but just recovering from 'fatigue' under his doctor's advice.43

He returned to State House in Gaborone on January 3rd, 1980, but was still not fit enough to go to the Beira meeting of the Front-Line presidents on January 14th - when they insisted that Britain follow the 'spirit and the letter' of the Lancaster House agreement." During the first two and a half weeks of February, Seretse was again not available for work, taking his official annual leave somewhat early in the year. Colleagues began to realize that it was evidently more than 'fatigue' that was affecting him.45

Seretse rallied himself for the four-hour flight to Dar es Salaam on February 26th, for a key meeting of the Front-Line presidents on the eve of the tense but vital elections being held in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. The emergency summit, summoned only the previous day, lasted for two hours. The presidents agreed on some contingency plans, as yet undisclosed, to cover the immediate threat of the South African government intervening in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia to stop the election process. The Patriotic Front was proving - against all the expectations of Smith and Muzorewa - to be winning.46 Seretse stayed overnight in Dar es Salaam and returned home the next day.

The great moment of fulfilment for all the Front-Line States came on March 4th, 1980, when they were able to send messages of congratulation to Robert Mugabe on becoming prime minister of Zimbabwe - after the first free and fair elections held on a universal franchise in that country's history. Seretse's message to Mugabe was mindful as ever about the need for national unity, not just between ZANU and ZAPU (within the PF government) but also between black and white in the new Zimbabwe:

The people of Botswana look forward to restoring normal relations and co-operation between our two countries. We also wish you well in the enormous tasks of reconstruction and reconciliation which lie ahead, and which we know will be the main priorities of your Government in the immediate post independence period.47
During March, it was decided that Botswana would resist U.S. pressure to boycott the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. Botswana had condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but as it had resisted the O.A.U. boycott of the 1976 Olympics in Montreal (over New Zealand and South Africa) it saw no reason to be inconsistent just to please the U.S.A. Once again M.P.s in the National Assembly in Gaborone demanded to be better informed about Botswana's foreign relations.48

Seretse's last burst of political activity was to set the SADCC (Southern African Development Coordination Conference) initiative firmly on course. Archie Mogwe, his foreign minister, had been sent around the region to recruit Malawi, Lesotho and Swaziland to join the Front-Line States in SADCC after Mozambique's key acceptance that Malawi should be invited. The independence of Zimbabwe now made even better sense of the geographical jigsaw of member states: SADCC could be a solid block of territories with contiguous borders between all its member states but one - Lesotho. It awaited only Namibia and South Africa as post-colonial independent states to complete the whole southern jigsaw.

The heads of state and government of the newly complete SADCC met for their first summit in Lusaka at the beginning of April 1980. Seretse Khama sat as chairman of the meeting with Masire as his deputy. Photographs show him looking extremely gaunt, but he put his ideas of the development of the SADCC idea quite clearly to the meeting:

We seek to overcome the fragmentation of our economies and, by coordinating our national development efforts, to strengthen them. The basis of our co-operation, built on concrete projects and specific programmes rather than grandiose schemes and massive bureaucratic institutions, must be [to the] assured mutual advantage of all participating states.49

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The conference ended in a 'Lusaka Declaration' by the participants. The heart of SADCC's priorities was to be the development of the so-called 'Beira corridor', between Zimbabwe and Mozambique, to carry the goods of land-locked states like Botswana and thus reduce existing dependence on South African ports and railways. It was this policy of 'disengagement' from South Africa which therefore received the most press coverage.

SADCC also decided to award its initial chairmanship to Botswana and to locate its small secretariat in Gaborone, in recognition of Seretse's and Botswana's role in founding the organization. The secretariat in Gaborone was to be small, in order to place the most emphasis on 'bilateral relations' between member states - with relevant ministries and departments from different countries meeting each other face to face to coordinate plans for specific projects.

The emphasis on the 'concrete' and 'specific' against the 'grandiose' gave SADCC a specifically Botswana flavour. Seretse's point about 'massive bureaucratic institutions' seems to have been a sideswipe against the U.N's Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). SADCC was greeted by its supporters as the first
major initiative for regional integration by post-colonial states to originate within southern Africa - contrasting it with regional organizations 'inherited from the colonial past, or stage-managed by European sponsors or the Economic Commission for Africa'. This aroused the ire of Adedeji and Nomvete of the E.C.A. in Addis, whose P.T.A., from Ethiopia to Zambia, had been so long in preparation as the first step towards a 'common market' for eastern and southern Africa. SADCC supporters felt that the P.T.A. had bitten off more than it could chew, while the E.C.A. proved to be 'overtly hostile to the SADCC initiatives'.

Adedeji and Nomvete began to work first on President Kaunda and then Prime Minister Mugabe to wean them away from exclusive allegiance to SADCC.

Early in April 1980, Seretse received a letter from Julius Nyerere which thanked him, 'before the file is closed', for the part he had played in the struggle for the liberation of southern Africa:

For I am now - as I have always been - very conscious of the courage with which you and your people have faced the difficulties forced upon Botswana by the necessary armed struggle in Zimbabwe. Despite Botswana's unique geopolitical position you have never hesitated in backing the Liberation struggle; at the same time your honest realism and emphasis upon the need for unity among the Zimbabwean nationalists has been of immense importance in our frontline meetings.

Seretse was delighted with the letter, and even more delighted to be one of the guests of honour at the Zimbabwean independence celebrations when the last Union Jack in Africa was lowered at midnight on April 17th. Seretse and Ruth had attended uhuru celebrations in Kenya and Zambia and Botswana in the 1960s. Now a new era was beginning, as Zimbabwe became a FrontLine State and the liberation struggle moved onwards to become concentrated on Botswana's western and southern neighbours, Namibia and South Africa.

There had already been premonitions of trouble to come with South Africa during 1979. South African refugee activists belonging to small 'black consciousness' groups had crossed the border and engaged South African forces in minor gun-battles, resulting in South African threats 'to cross into Botswana to knock out their bases.' The Gaborone trial and jailing of three A.N.C. activists for possession of weapons in March 1979 seems to have been in response to a South African threat to mortar the city suburb where the arms were cached. The funeral in Gaborone of David Sibeko, the P.A.C. leader assassinated in Dar es Salaam in June 1979, had brought scores of African mourners from South Africa and had increased the tensions between South Africa and Botswana.

One of the guests at the Zimbabwe celebrations was Forbes Burnham, an old friend of Seretse's from his student days in London and now the Prime Minister of Guyana in South America. Burnham flew on to a relaxed official visit in Botswana on April 23rd-25th. Seretse took him around the new Orapa diamond
mine. Photographs show Seretse looking ever more gaunt in face and body, with his clothes hanging loosely.
Seretse returned to more or less normal routines between mid-April and mid-June 1980, giving no one outside his immediate circle any particular concern as to his health. In early May he unveiled an extension to the Gaborone golf club, seeming relaxed and humorous. In mid-May he addressed the national executive of the B.D.P., urging its members to keep their ears open to people's opinions through B.D.P. branches. He saw the role of the Botswana Democratic Party as being to 'weld the nation together to build a stable and secure society.'
The next day he was down at the University College of Botswana campus to greet an international conference of school science-teachers. He urged the Batswana delegates to reflect the four 'national principles' of democracy, development, self-reliance and unity in their teaching syllabi. His most interesting comments were on government assistance for self-help education initiatives such as community junior secondary schools and training brigade centres. He emphasized that government's role was just to assist them and not to take them over. Government take-overs and reliance on government would defeat the whole idea of self-reliance.

On Wednesday, May 21st, Seretse and Ruth flew to Maputo for a one day visit with Samora and Grace Machel, who were beginning to see Mozambique and Botswana as twin states because of their common practical commitment to non-racialism, their SADCC connection, and their proximity to the Transvaal province of South Africa. Machel and Seretse and their aides discussed bilateral and regional issues, including the railways that linked them through Zimbabwe, and the coming November 1980 SADCC economic summit to be held in Maputo - to coordinate international development agencies together in specific joint SADCC projects. Mozambique had the task of setting up a regional transport commission, while Botswana had the overall task of coordinating the coordinators.

Friday, May 23rd, was, according to the Botswana Daily News, a 'busy day' for Seretse. He opened the beautiful new tarred Lobatse-Jwaneng road, which wound through the crags of Kanye. He was also pictured cracking a huge grin at De Beers officials on the new diamond mine at Jwaneng. This would at last give 'southerners' something to crow about after all the years of 'northerners' boasting about mining development at Orapa and Selebi-Phikwe.’

On Monday, June 2nd, Seretse and Ruth flew to Lusaka for him to attend what was to be his last meeting of Front-Line States' leaders - also the first attended by Robert Mugabe in his capacity as prime minister of Zimbabwe. The issue at stake, now that Zimbabwe was independent, was options for an independence settlement for Namibia. Seretse returned home the next morning.

Seretse's preoccupation for most of the rest of June was measures to eradicate foot-and-mouth outbreaks near the Zimbabwe border, which were once again threatening to curtail Botswana's beef exports to the E.E.C. Seretse insisted that nothing be hidden from E.E.C. inspectors - a move which paid off as it gave them confidence to authorize exports at least from southern Botswana. But it meant
three lines of cattle cordon fencing across Central District being used as buffers to protect the southern market, and the denial of income from cattle sales to the Bangwato. Seretse went north to address kgotla meetings at Lethakane and Tsienyane in the Boteti area, and a gathering of 5 000 in the Serowe kgotla, to thank the Bangwato for their compliance with the cordon regulations and to ask for more. A photograph shows an emaciated Seretse bundled in a thick warm coat to keep out the winter chill, waving cheerfully to people in the Lethakane kgotla while he appeals for all-out “war’ on foot-and-mouth to get cattle exports moving again.51

The last photograph of Seretse Khama to appear in the Botswana Daily News was on June 19th, 1980. It shows him with the face of an old man, sitting with long thin fingers splayed on a table around which sit members of a delegation from the World Muslim League and Congress - a body from the Middle East whose delegates had previously visited Mozambique and Zimbabwe.5"

Seretse declined to make concessions to failing health until the third week in June, 1980. On Monday, June 23rd, he flew to London with Ruth and Merriweather for further tests and consultations. The public was told that it was merely a six-monthly medical check-up, and that President Khama would be back in ten days. At least one minister, Peter Mmusi, watching his emaciated president taking leave of the people at Gaborone airport, en route to London via Johannesburg, reflected that Seretse was unlikely to return alive.59

After a brief period of examination in the London Clinic, an extraordinarily blunt public statement was issued. Seretse Khama was dying of ‘cancer of the abdomen.’ Cancer had spread from the pancreas to the liver and was aggravating his heart and kidney conditions. Merriweather made it clear to the hospital consultant, Sir Richard Bayliss, that Seretse could not be allowed to die in the London Clinic like his uncle Tsehekedi, but must as a matter of political and symbolic urgency - be returned home to Botswana. Seretse was in no condition to be sent home seated on a public flight. Arrangements were hurriedly made in consultation with Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office for Seretse to be flown, in as much comfort as possible, in a VC-10 four-engined jet airliner of the Royal Air Force. (Thirty years earlier it had been a much more modest R.A.F. plane which had flown him and Ruth from Lobatse on the first leg of their exile.) The VC-10 took off from London on the evening of Sunday, June 29th. Ruth remained constantly at her husband’s side during the overnight flight, as the VC-10 flew due south from Land's End over the dark waters of the Atlantic to Ascension Island. There the plane refuelled and headed east-south-east during daylight hours for Francistown in Botswana - which unlike Gaborone had a big enough airport for it to land. Seretse was then transferred to a smaller aircraft to arrive home in Gaborone at 8 pm on the evening of Monday, June 30th, 1980. The next day, July 1st, was his 59th birthday.
Cabinet, partly out of deference to Seretse, had appointed his cousin Lenyeletse Seretse as Acting President during the absence of Seretse in England and Masire on a prearranged visit to China. Masire cut short his trip and returned home a day after Seretse. Immediately on Masire's return, Seretse revoked Lenyeletse's appointment and appointed Masire as Acting President instead. But Seretse did not call for Masire or other Cabinet ministers to visit him, and they came to understand that Ruth and the children were drawing tightly around him in a protective circle.

Seretse was reported to have slept well on his first night, the Monday, back in Gaborone. The country was kept informed by radio and newspapers. The Botswana Daily News reported that prayers for the President were being said by religious groups - Christian, Muslim, Hindu - and other institutions throughout the country. President's Day holiday activities were cancelled, as were U.S. embassy celebrations for July 4th and French embassy celebrations for July 14th. A great open-air service was held jointly by Christian denominations outside Gaborone's town hall to pray for the President on Sunday, July the 6th.60 Further specialist advice on Seretse's medical data was sought from Johannesburg and Washington D.C., which merely confirmed the London diagnosis of no hope. After a Johannesburg specialist visited him on Wednesday the 2nd, Seretse rallied a little. On Sunday the 6th he spent an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon sitting quietly in the warm winter sun in the garden of State House. But he was growing weaker as the days progressed. From Tuesday the 8th he was slipping faster towards the abyss.

Seretse Khama died at State House, Gaborone, at about 4.45 am on Sunday, July 13th, 1980, with Ruth Khama holding him. The news was given to the nation a few hours later by Acting President Masire in a short four-minute broadcast.6’ Masire announced a month of mourning and demoted himself to the status of Vice-President again. He refused to revert to the legally correct title of Acting President so long as Seretse's body remained unburied.

Lady Khama rang David Finlay, Seretse's former private secretary and a trusted family friend, with the news of Seretse's death and asked him to take care of the funeral arrangements. Finlay immediately arranged to meet undertakers who drove from Mafikeng to meet him in Gaborone that Sunday morning. While standing waiting for the arrival of the undertakers in the shade of a building in the Gaborone Mall, Finlay watched crowds of ordinary people hurrying past to the churches to mourn their President with tears streaming from their eyes. The churches were crammed and overflowing that morning, some people kneeling outside in the dust.62 Forty thousand people paid their respects to the late President by filing through the building of the National Assembly where the body lay in state in a closed coffin, covered by the presidential flag, between Monday, July 21st and Wednesday, July 23rd. The heavy casket was taken to rest overnight in the Anglican cathedral and then to the National Stadium for a state memorial service.
on Thursday, July 24th. The service was conducted by Bishop Walter Makhulu of the Anglican Church and Monsignor Boniface Setalekgosi of the Roman Catholic Church, and by Seretse's physician Rev Dr Alfred Merriweather - who had turned down the position of Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland in order to stay in Botswana. Orations were given by Quett Masire and Kenneth Kaunda. Also in attendance were Julius Nyerere, Samora Machel, Kamuzu Banda, Rev Canaan Banana (the President of Zimbabwe), King Moshoeshoe II of Lesotho and the Duke of Kent (representing Queen Elizabeth II). The U.S. delegation included its ambassador to the U.N., Don McHenry, and Bob Edwards, the young American from Mafikeng secretariat days who had now risen to be president of Carleton College.63

As was the case when George Washington died, there was some tension between family and nation as to where the 'Father of the Nation' should be buried. The family won through. On Friday, July 25th, 1980, after a relay of pallbearers from Bangwato mephato age-regiments had handed on the casket to six Cabinet ministers, Seretse was buried next to his ancestors in the royal family graveyard high on the hillside at Serowe.

Seretse Khama's grave bears a simple inscription, a favourite quotation that he remembered from a sermon by a lay preacher back in his schooldays:
The world is my church.
Lefatshe ke kereke yame
To do good my religion
Go dira molemo tumelo yame

EPILOGUE
by
Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere
Six years after his death, a bronze statue of Seretse Khama was unveiled in central Gaborone outside the parliament and main government office buildings. On September 30th, 1986, thousands of people gathered to see the statue unveiled by President Quett Masire, and to listen to a tribute made by Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere - Seretse's old friend who had retired from office as President of Tanzania a year earlier

The occasion was given particular poignancy as, not only was the day Botswana's celebration of 20 years of independence, but there had also been two traumatic invasions of Gaborone by South Africa in the previous year and a half - ostensibly in search of South African exiles. South African ground forces had struck in the dead of night in June 1985, attacking numerous houses with mortars and grenades - leaving 12 dead, including children and adults who had had no South African connection. South African helicopters had attacked again in May 1986, at the same time as attacks were made on Harare and Lusaka - to disrupt the mission of Commonwealth 'eminent persons' in South Africa.
Botswana was now trapped in the regional war which Seretse had predicted would spill over from apartheid in South Africa. People in the crowd around the unveiling of the statue looked back with longing to the days of their beloved Seretse. But there was also good reason to hope and feel that Seretse had left a heritage that would give people the confidence to weather the storms that South Africa and the region must endure. 

Julius Nyerere's speech that day touched on these popular sentiments, and combined them with his personal insights into the character of Seretse Khama. There is no more fitting end to this biography than to quote Nyerere's speech at length.

There are some political leaders who serve a cause by their flamboyance. They make it impossible to ignore uncomfortable issues. But sometimes they attract so much unnecessary hostility that they damage the cause to which they are committed.

Seretse Khama was not one of them.

There are some political leaders who go quietly around the world, so concerned to avoid attracting hostility that they retreat from any policy position as soon as it is seriously challenged by nations with economic or political power.

Seretse Khama was not one of them. There are some leaders who are so earnest and solemn in their committed pursuit of their goals that they make even the most exciting work of freedom and development seem dull and uninviting.

Seretse Khama was not one of them.

Seretse Khama - as a man and as a President of his country - was an exemplar of principled and quiet dignity. The anger at injustice which he felt, was never allowed to find expression in personal abuse; and it never over-rode his reason. He could laugh at himself and the world at the same time, as he participated in the work of overcoming the evils of apartheid and oppression. 

President Seretse Khama gave very great service to Africa, to the cause of freedom in Africa, and to the development of human dignity for all Africans - whatever their colour, race or religion.

He gave service quietly but firmly. Without bombast and with great realism he took certain positions of principle and stood by them. In all the Councils of Africa and the world, it became known [that] from the representative of Botswana you will get the case for African freedom and dignity argued quietly, logically, and with good humour. His position will be very clear, and what he says is what he means.

Let me be quite honest. When Botswana became independent I rejoiced because another part of the continent had gained Uhuru. But when I looked at the map I expected nothing more than the formality of political freedom. A large country with a very small population, squeezed between apartheid South Africa and minority-ruled Rhodesia - what could it do except try to survive with as much dignity as it could muster? That was my feeling; I believe it was widely shared by all those committed to African liberation.
President Seretse Khama would have none of that. He never claimed to be able to do more than the circumstances of his country allowed. But he showed what can be done with principled commitment, with ingenuity, and with courage. He exploited to the utmost the legal and political freedom of his country, in order to promote the well-being of the people of Botswana and the cause of Africa's freedom.

On every appropriate occasion he spoke quietly but firmly against apartheid, against the occupation of Namibia, and against minority rule in Rhodesia. At the United Nations, at Commonwealth Summit Meetings, and at the Non-Aligned Summit Conference, we learned to wait for Seretse's contribution.

With every excuse of economics and communications for doing otherwise, President Seretse Khama refused to have any political relations with the Minority Regime in Rhodesia. He refused to have any top-level political contact with the political rulers of apartheid; and there was - and is no exchange of diplomats with the apartheid state. Indeed, President Khama insisted that all other political contact with South Africa be kept to an irreducible minimum. He refused to recognize, either officially or by unofficial contact, the so-called independent Bantustan which South Africa set up on the borders of Botswana.

He went further. Despite Botswana's need for development finance, President Seretse Khama made it clear that his country would accept no official aid from South Africa. And he allowed his country to be the first nation of refuge for those fleeing from the racial and political persecutions of apartheid.

President Seretse Khama made no great promises in response to the emotions of the world-wide anti-apartheid struggle. But from his own commitment to political equality and dignity, he considered what was the maximum his country could do. Then he did it.

The President of Botswana could not have so consistently taken his antiapartheid stance without the support of the people of Botswana. They share in his achievements. But he gave leadership. He set the course. We are indebted to him.

But Seretse Khama did more than that for Africa. He was an active and effective member of the Front Line States. No meeting was the same when Seretse could not be there; we missed his quietness, his reasonableness and his good humour.

One of his greatest contributions is that he initiated SADCC [the Southern African Development Coordination Conference]. The meeting which formally took the decision to establish SADCC was held in Arusha, Tanzania; that was merely a recognition of geographical realities. It was Seretse Khama who was responsible for that meeting being held; and he gave the keynote speech in opening it.

I repeat: we owe the existence of the most effective Sub-Regional organisation of African cooperation to the initiative of President Seretse Khama. It was a great bequest to Africa, and to the Third World.

Seretse Khama was an African to the core. He was a tribal leader by accident of birth. He was a national leader because he - and his people
recognized that history had made tribal organization politically irrelevant to the struggle for freedom. He became an African leader because he recognized that freedom is indivisible, and that true liberation for Africa requires that the artificial national boundaries should become mere administrative conveniences. Seretse Khama was also a democrat - by inheritance, by nature, and by intellectual conviction. The Equality of Man was so deeply engrained in him that he noticed neither race, colour, religion nor creed - only character and actions. He was a man of courage, who lived and did his great work regardless of the personal as well as political threat which was inseparable from his nation's borders with apartheid South Africa, and with the then minorityruled Southern Rhodesia.

Seretse Khama was a man of great ability. He could be very serious, but he was never pompously solemn. He had a tremendous sense of humour. By a quiet remark he could puncture the boasting and pretensions of others. Yet he was never vicious, and he bore no grudges. Seretse was my friend. It was a joy to work with him in the tasks of Africa.

Notes for pages (xii)-(xiii) & 1-7
NOTES & REFERENCES

Introduction:

Chapter 1:
INHERITANCE, 1921-37
1. Tlou interviews with Bolapetola Mabipe (born 1908), Mothodi Ward, Serowe, 16 March 1984; Mmadira, Palapye, 1 May 1985.
2. As in Note 1.
4. As in Note 1.
6. As in Note 1; Bolapetola & Monamati of Bobonong (Tlou interview 30 Jan. 1984) add that after Khama told the Bangwato, 'This is your kgosi' in the kgotla, he explained how he had been promised a wife by the British in 1895 and prophesied that Seretse would marry an English woman.


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Notes for pages 7-14


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32. BNA - S.4/1: HC to RC 21 Feb. 1923; HC to RC with condolences of Secretary of State for Colonies 22 Feb. 1923; Whittington de Motsamai to GS 26 Feb. 1923; RM Serowe to Ag. GS 26 Feb. 1923; Ag. Secretary General of SA Native National Congress condolences of 13 March 1923; Sekgoma II to RC 10 April 1923; RC to HC 27 April 1923; S.137: RM Serowe to RC 3 March 1923; Tiger Kloof Archives, Moeding College: No.356 Bamangwato affairs n.d. 33.

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41. BNA - S.11/4: RM Serowe telegram to RC 30 July 1925. Had sweetened orange juice set off the diabetic fit? 42. BNA - S.11/4: Dr D. Drew to Principal Medical Officer (Donald McRae) Mafikeng 31 July 1925.


47. As in Note 43.


49. BNA - S.11/4: RM Serowe telegram to RC 15 Nov. 1925; Crowder, 'Succession crisis'.

Chapter 2:
CHILDHOOD, 1925-39
2. BNA - S.601/24: Tshekedi Khama to RM Serowe 13 March 1927; Crowder, Flogging of Phinehas McIntosh; Tlou
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interview with G. Otsile of Serowe, n.d.
17. As in Note 15.
1&As in Note 15.


23. Ibid.


25. BNA - BTA C/3/621: RM Serowe to Tshekedi Khama 3 Feb. 1931; Moremi Mathiba to Tshekedi Khama 17 May 1934; S.169/9: extract from RC to RM Serowe 12 Dec. 1930; H. Jowitt to Dumbrell 7 Jan. 1931; Nettelton to GS 21 Jan. 1931; C.F. Rey (RC) to Dutton (GS) 24 Jan. 1931; S.169/10: Nettelton to Dutton 28 March 1931. 26. BNA - BTA C/3/621: Tshekedi Khama to Principal Lovedale 21 Aug. 1930; Tshekedi Khama to Boarding Master Lovedale 17 Feb. 1931. On Mohl (1903-82) see Elza Miles (comp.), Fuba Academy Artists' Birthday Calendar 1993 Johannesburg: FUBA (Federated Union of Black Artists) Academy, 1992, entry for September. We are grateful to Elza Miles, FUBA's visual arts researcher, for alerting us to this and sending us a copy. 27. BNA - S.302/1: extract from CF. Rey (RC) to Sir Herbert Stanley (HC) 4 Nov. 1932.


Notes for pages 32-38

to Gasetshwarwe Kgamane 11 Nov. 1932; S.302/2: RC's report on Gasetshwarwe conspiracy n.d.


32. For further details see Crowder, The Flogging of Phinehas McIntosh, passim.

33. BNA - S.48/5: Proceedings of the Special Court. (See also S.48/6, S.48/7.) 34. BNA - BTA C/3/621: Bamangwato Chiefs Secretary to Mrs Geddes n.d.; Mrs Geddes to Tshekedi Khama 9 April 1935; Principal Lovedale to Tshekedi Khama 9 April 1935; S.169/11: HC to Tshekedi Khama 21 June 1935; Mary Benson,


37. BNA - BTA C/3/621: Tshekedi Khama to D. Clark 25 June 1935; Dr Austin Morgan to Mrs Clark 24 April 1935; Mr R.M. Clark to Tshekedi Khana 27 April 1935; Tshekedi Khama to Mrs Clark 26 April 1935; Tshekedi Khama to Mr R.M. Clark 6 July & 31 Dec. 1935.


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Notes for pages 38-46


47. See Tshekedi-Seretse correspondence in Notes 43 & 46 above; BNA - BTA C/3/621: Tshekedi Khama to Seretse 26 May, 18 Aug. & 6 Sept. 1937; Seretse Khama to Tshekedi Khama n.d.; Seretse Khama to Mrs Tshekedi 25 May 1937; Tlou interview with James Mpotokwane, Tonota, 19 March 1984. 48. BNA -


Chapter 3: MANHOOD, 1940-48


3. As in Note 1. Annie Geddes' husband, Major Geddes, born at Lovedale and boarding master since 1919, was ill from 1938 and died in 1941 - Shepherd, Lovedale, pp.118-19.

4. BNA - BTA C/3/621: Seretse Khama to Tshekedi Khama 16 June 1940; Principal Lovedale to Tshekedi Khama 26 June 1940; Tshekedi Khama to Principal Lovedale 8 July 1940.

5. Tlou interview with Theophilus Tshiamo Tamocha, Mahalapye, 22 March 1984; Tlou interview with Dabutha 0. Sedie, Serowe, 16
Notes for pages 46-53
7. BNA - OP 1/6/2991 (H 196/6): RC to Chief Secretary 2 April 1960; Luli Callinicos interview with Oliver Thombo, Transkei, Feb. 1993 - we are grateful to Luli Callinicos for providing a transcript.
Presumably Capt. Starkey was an American, as his name cannot be detected in the character lists of British films - see Denis Gifford (comp.), The British Film Catalogue 1895-1985: a Reference Guide London: David & Charles, 2nd. edn., 1986, which lists film titles month by month with the names of their main actors and the characters that they played. 11. Tlou interviews with Sedie, Tamocha, Lesetedi, Mosinyi & Mpedi, 1984. (See Notes 8 & 9 above.)
16. Tlou interviews with T.T. Tamocha & G. Mosinyi, as above.
17. Tlou interviews with Lesetedi, Phala, Mosinyi & Lady Khama, as above.

Notes for pages 53-62
36. BNA - BTA C/3/621: Seretse Khana to Tshekedi Khama 26 April 1944; Tlou interview with Radiphofo as in Note 34. 37. Tlou interview with Vivienne

38. BNA-S.169/14-1: 'Notes for discussion (Seretse's education)', by Tshekedi Khama 17 July 1945; Tlou communication from Registrar University of the Witwatersrand 4 April 1985.


Tshekedi understood that Seretse would be given credit for law courses taken at the University of the Witwatersrand. 42. BNA - BTA C/3/61: Tshekedi to Seretse 5 Sept. 1943; Seretse to Tshekedi 12 Oct. 1943; Tlou interview with Lady Khama, 29 Sept. 1985; Tiger Kloof Archives, Moeding - No.357: Haile to Whitehouse 19 Aug. 1945. For Thomas Paine see Chapter 14, Note 64, below.

43. BNA - S.169/14-11: W. Bryant (Cape Town representative of U.K. Ministry of War Transport) to Priestman (HCO) 19 August 1945; P. Fryer, Staying Power: the History

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47. PRO - DO 35/4113: Tshekedi Khama 'Presentation of the position arising in the political crisis occasioned by the marriage of Seretse Khama .. - covering letter & appendices.

63. 'Ruth Williams first met Seretse at hostel dance' Cape Argus 7 Sept. 1949. This corrected the spurious 'Ruth met Seretse in a London dance hall' in the Sunday times (Johannesburg) of 10 July 1949. For the supposition that white girls seen with black men in England were no better than prostitutes see Dutfield, Marriage, p.3. 64. K3MM - TKP 86: typescript of article in Ebony June 1951, enclosed in Bathoen II to Tshekedi 29 Feb. 1952. 65. Parsons interviews with Lady Khama, 8-9 June 1986, April 1989 & 16 Oct. 1990. Cf. Dutfield, Marriage, p.5. 66. As in Note 64. Cf. Dutfield, Marriage, pp.1-5.
70. Sillery quotes his briefing at the D.O./C.R.O. in 1946-47: 'Mr Tait, head of the High Commission Territories section, spoke mainly on the impossibility of making the people of Bechuanaland less dependent
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Chapter 4:
MARRIAGE, 1948-50

1. Seretse Khama to Tshekedi Khama 12 Sept. 1948. This document, originally in
the evidence file of the Harragin Enquiry of 1949 (BNA - S.599/11), has since
been removed by the Director of the Botswana National Archives for safe
keeping.

2. Sillery, 'Working Backwards'. Dutfield's television programme 'Marriage of
Inconvenience' ( Maidstone, Kent: Southern Television, 1990) incorrectly places
Tshekedi in Serowe when he received the letter. Dutfield's book (Marriage, pp.9
& 25) quotes the gist of the letter but is spurious in detail e.g. 'the person I am
marrying is a white woman.'

3. 'Presentation of the position arising in the political crisis occasioned by the
marriage of Seretse Khama to Ruth Williams in England. Case presented by Chief
Tshekedi Khama of the Bamangwato people and their Legal Adviser Adv D.M.
Seretse to Tshekedi 12 Sept. 1948 as annexure G); copies in PRO - DO 35/4113;
BNA - DCS 37/12. A number of copies in K3MM possession seem to have been
destroyed as 'too personal' by its curator c.1986. Books using the appendices as
the basis of their account include Benson, Tshekedi and Dutfield, Marriage. The
main account is a Memorandum by R.K. Orchard of the L.M.S., dated 25 Sept.
1948 with
postscript dated 27 Sept. 1948.

4. K3MM - TKP 86: typescript of article in Ebony June 1951, enclosed in
Batshoen I to Tshekedi 29 Feb. 1952.

5. PRO - DO 35/4113: Note on telephone call to J.L. Keith (Director of Colonial
C.R.O. to H.C. 2 Oct. 1948 (incorrectly dating marriage on 30 Sept.); Coupland to
C.R.O. 1 Oct. 1948; Pilkington to Tshekedi 27 Oct. 1948 (BNA - DCS 37/12 &
end. as annexure in 'Presentation' of Note 3 above).

&Cf. 'Tribal chief will fight for me - exoffice girl' Daily Mirror (London) 22 Oct.
1948; photograph of Seretse and Ruth in Daily Advertiser (Port Elizabeth) 23
1948; 'English wife must go - tribe' The Star (Johannesburg) 29 Oct. 1948; 'Typist
has caused constitutional crisis' Sunday Ilmes (Johannesburg) 31 Oct. 1948. On
Ruth Williams as typist see G.E. Nettelton to V. Ellenberger 4 July 1949 (BNA -
S. 169/15/3); 'Typist!!' said she, 'I would rather die than be a typist!'

9. Nettelton to Priestman HCO 1 Nov. 1948. 10. Sillery, 'Working Backwards,
pp.212 & 220. Cf. BNA - DCS 37/12. U. Kgotla accounts encl. in DCS to GS 16,
19 & 23 Nov. 1948 (BNA - DCS 37/12). Cf. report of kgotla in Daily Mail
(London) 24 Nov. 1948.


14. BNA - DCS 13/12: Kgotla account (24pp) encl. in Tshekedi to DCS 5 Jan.
1949. 15. BNA - DCS 13/12: Kalahari to Discom Serowe telegram 30 Dec. 1948;
DCS to GS 31 Dec. 1948; Notes of discussion between Nettelton and Seretse 29 Dec. 1948; Tshekedi to DCS 4 Jan. 1949.

16. PRO - DO 35/4113: Copy of Tshekedi Khama to RC 29 Jan. 1949; BNA S.169/15/3: Original draft of Tshekedi Khama

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20. BNA - S.169/15/4: Capital Seretse (9912A White City, Orlando) to GS 23 May 1949.

21. BNA - S.17/1/1: Report on Tribal Meetings held in Serowe ... 20th to 25th June 1949 ... by V.F. Ellenberger, Mafikeng, 29 June 1949.

22. ibid.


32. BNA - S.169/15/4: 'Tribesmen acclaim typist for Queen' Daily Express 24 June 1949; 'Implications of Serowe decision' & 'Union and Seretse's marriage' The Star 25 June 1949; 'Government does not want Seretse Khama's white wife to land in Union' Sunday Times (Johannesburg) 3 July 1949. 33. PRO - DO
35/4115: 'Strong protest against decision on Seretse: Union cannot remain indifferent' Die Transvaler 30 June 1949 (translation).

34. Dutfield, Marriage, pp.86-87 gives no South African government source: it is presumably extrapolated from PRO - DO 35/4114: Baring (HCO) to Liesching (CRO) secret and personal 11 July 1949. 35. PRO - DO 35/4113: Record of Conversation between Secretary of State and the High Commissioner for South Africa on 30 June 1949.


47. RHL - Fabian Colonial Bureau Papers Box 94 File 1: Jock Stewart (Pretoria) to FCB 5 Dec. 1949.

Notes for pages 93-98
10 Dec. 1949; draft Cabinet Memorandum c.13 Dec. 1949 (we must avoid even the appearance of allowing our action in such a matter to be dictated from the Union of South Africa); 'Notes of meetings held in Secretary of State's room on 13th and 14th December, 1949' (incl. Noel-Baker, Gordon Walker, Baring, Liesching); 'Notes of a meeting held in the Secretary of State's room Commonwealth Relations Office, on the 16th December [1949]' (incl. also Creech Jones & A.B. Cohen); 'Notes on a meeting held in the Secretary of State's room on 19th December 1949'; HCO to CRO 24 Dec. 1949; Baring (HCO) to Baxter (CRO) 27 Dec. 1949; Minutes by Gibson dated 12 Dec. 1949. 56 PRO - DO 35/4118: 'Notes of meetings held in Secretary of State's room on 13th and 14th December, 1949'; Notes by Hudson of CO on draft Cabinet Paper 18 Jan. 1950;

Chapter 5: BANISHMENT, 1950-52
2. As in Note 1; PRO - DO 35/4119: Notes on conversation of Keith with Seretse Kham 17 Feb. 1950 - with 'Seretse was a gentleman' underlined by Noel-Baker, who adds 'I agree' in attached minute of 19 Feb. 1950.
3. PRO - DO 35/4119: Minute by Noel-

Notes for pages 98-103
5. Parsons interview with Miss Emery, 28 Aug. 1984; Churchill College, Cambridge, Papers of Earl Attlee ATTL 1/17, draft of autobiography chapter xviii p.15 ('Noel-Baker ... his judgment was poor ... I persuaded him to go after a hard tussle ... I replaced NoelBaker with Gordon Walker who had shown exceptional ability'); PRO - DO 35/4125: Note of a CO/CRO meeting with 'Seretse Khama Fighting Committee' 17 March 1950 (statement by Mr Allison 'President of the African League' re. Gordon Walker).
6. PRO - DO 35/4119: 'Notes of a meeting held at the C.R.O. at 3 pm on Friday 3rd March, 1950' (Gordon Walker, Addison, Liesching, Abrahams, Seretse, Rathcreeden, Fraenkel); Parsons interview with George Winstanley, 6 Sept. 1990.
Dutfield, Marriage, p.159 has 'Tribe and I ...' [source unknown].
8. PRO - DO 35/4120: Liesching (CRO) to Baring (HC) 14 March 1950.
9. Daily Mail (London) 7 March 1950; Cape Argus (Cape Town) 7 March 1950 ('Both "kicked out"'); The Star (Johannesburg) 7 March 1950 ('Seretse says he has been told he must not return home for five years').
10. DO 35/4120: HC to CRO 10 March 1950 (digest of S.A. press comment); copy of CO to governors of Nigeria, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland & of CRO to Central African Council, telegram 9 March 1950; Minute by G.H. Baxter 8 March 1950; Cape limes 11 March 1950.
South African newspapers erroneously reported that Seretse was being offered £11 000 rather than £1 100 a year to stay away from the B.P. It. House of Commons Debates, Hansard (8 March 1950), cols.283-94 (Gordon Walker's lie in col.286) & House of Lords Debates Hansard (8 March 1950), cols.151-4; 'Seretse's exile confirmed: Churchill raises point of honour' Cape limes 9 March 1950.


19. RHL - Fabian Colonial Bureau Papers (Mss. s.365) Box 91 File 3 ff.147-53: Resolution of Seretse Khama Fighting

Notes for pages 103-107


20. PRO - DO 35/4125: Note of CO & CRO meeting with Seretse Khama Fighting Committee 17 March 1950. The Learie Constantine delegation had the unintended side-effect of ringing alarm bells in the British cabinet about the continuation or increase of 'coloured' immigration into Britain from the West Indies: cf. CAB 128 (20 March 1950 para 7)


25. Sunday Times (Johannesburg) 19 March 1950; Cape Times 20 March 1950; PRO DO 35/4120: HC to CRO 20 March 1950 (Baring: 'This morning I saw General Smuts


'Not cricket, sir!' & 'Et tu, British!' The Daily Service (Lagos) Wed. 22 March 1950.

30. PRO - DO 35/4121: Extract from Calcutta Report for 6 April 1950; DO 35/4120: FO to CRO 24 March 1950 though Reuters reported from Nagpur, Central India, an African politician from Northern Rhodesia (Godwin Mbikusita Lewanika) who thought Seretse's exile 'wise'. On U.S.A. see Margaret Bourke-White, 'The white queen', Life Magazine (New York) vol.28 no.10 (March 1950), pp.95-97 & subsequent readers' letters. Arthur Benson (reference as in Note 24 above) claimed, 'The Americans paid an enormous amount of attention to the ['appalling reaction' in] the West Indies' papers.'

31. PRO - DO 35/4125: David C. Williams (Americans for Democratic Action) to Gordon Walker 23 March 1950; Minute by A. H. Joyce 30 March 1950; L. Finnegan to Williams, encl. in Williams to Gordon Walker 28 March 1950.


33. PRO - DO 35/4121: Minute by A.H. Joyce 17 April 1950; Fyfe Robertson, 'Rights and Wrongs of Seretse Khama', Picture Post vol.47 no.5 (29 April 1950), pp.18-25 & 53. 34. On Mahalapye (Monks & Redfern plan), see Dutfield, Marriage, pp.188-90 & photo. On Gaborone landing see Thomas J. Larson,

Notes for pages 107-114


42. PRO - DO 35/4122: HCO to CRO 24 Aug. 1950
43. PRO - DO 35/4131: Baring (HC) to Liesching (CRO) secret & personal 23 Aug. 1950.
58. Benson, Tsekedi, p.224; DO 35/4133: CRO to HCO 10 May 1951; HCO to CRO 2 & 30 May 1951.
60. PRO - DO 35/4133: CRO to HCO 21 June 1951, HCO to CRO 22 & 23 (x2) June 1951; Baring personal to Gordon Walker 23 June 1951.

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58. Benson, Tsekedi, p.224; DO 35/4133: CRO to HCO 10 May 1951; HCO to CRO 2 & 30 May 1951.
60. PRO - DO 35/4133: CRO to HCO 21 June 1951, HCO to CRO 22 & 23 (x2) June 1951; Baring personal to Gordon Walker 23 June 1951.


74. PRO - DO 121/151: record of meeting at CRO on 24 March 1952 - the last phrase being in Ismay's handwriting. See also CAB 129/50 pp.77-80: C(52)76 memorandum of 13 March 1952; ibid, pp.122-25: C(52)81 of 21 March 1952; CAB 128/24, pp.158-9: CC(52)31 minute 4; ibid, p.164 CC(52)33rd minute 7; ibid, p.179 CC(52)34; PREM 11/1182: Ismay to PM 14 & 21 March 1952; Salisbury to PM 18 & 26 March 1952. 75. PRO - DO 121/151: Clark minute 25 March 1952; draft Salisbury minute to PM 26 March 1952; record of interview at CRO 26 March 1952; note on 5 pm press briefing 26 March 1952.

76. Rand Daily Mail 2 Oct.; 1956 interview

Notes for pages 121-128 with Ruth Khama - as quoted in Frank, 'Khama and Jonathan, p.73.

Chapter 6:
EXILE, 1952-56
3. Parsons, 'Impact of Seretse Khama'.
5. PRO - FO 371/96649: Oliver Messel (London S.W.7) to Sir Anthony Eden 2 April 1952; FO to Messel 7 April 1952.
7. PRO - DO 35/4146: Clark minute 23 April 1952.
10. 'Seretse asks for a chance to go back'
Notes for pages 129-133

20. Northern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates, Hansard No.73 (3 July 1952), p.170
- different pagination (pp.13-15 & 47) in TKP 11 (K3MM).


Notes for pages 134-140
- DO 35/4455: CRO minutes of 10 & 12 Feb. 1953 & DO 35/4569: CRO to HCO 4 May 1953 & ref. SA Police claim in Tergos of May 1953 that Lt.-Col. Basil Davidson was a one-time member of the Communist Party of SA.


44. RHL - Fabian Colonial Bureau Papers 94/1: 'Strydom on U.P.'s war guilt' Cape Times 27 Nov. 1950.


61. K3MM - TKP 57: 'Followers of Seretse allege ... wave of terror by Tshekedi men' Golden City Post (Johannesburg) 12 Feb. 1956, p.9; 'Seretse men ready to ask for terms' Sunday Express (Johannesburg) 5 Feb. 1956, p.1; 'No unrest among Bamangwato' Mafeking Mail Sat. 11 Feb. 1956, p.1 (defensive B.P. government statement).

Notes for pages 144-148
64. PRO - DO 35/4382: CRO minutes by E.J. Emery to Fowler 20 April & 14 May 1956; CRO minute by R.WD. Fowler to Shannon 28 April 1956; CRO
Notes for pages 148-154
Chapter 7:
COUNCILLOR, 1956-60
1. PRO - DO 35/4283: extract from BBS Tergos newsletter for Oct. 1956, paras.15-24; 'Seretse given a delirious welcome' New Age (Johannesburg), vol.2, no.51 (18 Oct. 1956), p.1; Sunday limes (Johannesburg) 14 Oct. 1956;
4. PRO - as in Note 1 above; Stanley Uys in Sunday limes (Johannesburg) 14 Oct. 1956; Bulawayo Chronicle 12 Oct. 1956.
5. PRO - as in Note 1 above; The Star (Johannesburg) 15 Oct. 1956; Frank, 'Khama and Jonathan' pp.133-34.
14. PRO - DO 35/4306: Ernest Shirley, 'I find Ruth Khama building a house on Nob Hill' Daily Mail (Johannesburg) 15 July 1957. 15. BNA - DCN 9/5: Northern

Notes for pages 154-161
PRO - DO 35/4306: Margaret Lessing, 'Queen Ruth (the ex-secretary from Croydon) rules the roost' Daily Herald (London) 2 May 1957.
34. PRO - DO 35/4306: Margaret Lessing, 'Queen Ruth (the ex-secretary from Croydon) rules the roost' Daily Herald (London) 2 May 1957; Ernest Shirley, 'I find Ruth building a house on Nob Hill' Daily Mail 15 July 1957. 35. BNA - DCN

Notes for pages 161-171

Notes for pages 171-180

111. BNA - BNB 789: JAC Constitutional Committee passim.

Notes for pages 180-190

Chapter 8:

POLITICIAN, 1960-62

5. Legislative Assembly Hansard No.14 (1965), pp.84, 88, 149 & 194.

20. See the disquiet expressed in Botswana Democratic Party, Shaping the Destiny of a

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Notes for pages 190-203


21. BNA - S 582/3 folio 4, African Council elections.


28. ibid: Williams to Secretary of State, telegram 21 Aug. 1961. 29. As in Note 27.
30. As in Note 22.
36. ibid.
Chapter 9:
PARTY LEADER, 1962-64
1. Jack Halpern, South Africa's Hostages: 425

Notes for pages 203-215
3. ibid: H.D.V. Pakenham (British embassy, Tel Aviv) to FO West & Central Africa Dept. 31 Oct. 1962.
4. See Lucy Syson, Income Expenditure and Wealth in the Shoshong Area Gaborone: United Nations Development Programme (Surveys & Training for the Development of Water Resources and Agricultural Production, Technical Note No.31), April 1972, p.10 Table 2.
9. See Colin Morris, The Hour after Midnight: a Missionary's Experience of Racial and Political Struggle in Northern Rhodesia London: Longmans, 1961. Africa (later titled Africa Confidential) newsletter in London was using "non-
racialist' in January 1961 (vol.2, no.2), but was still getting it confused with multi-racialism in September 1961 (vol.2, no.19).


24. ibid, pp.353-7.
26. ibid, pp.27-31.

29. Edwin Munger, Bechuanaland: Pan-426

Notes for pages 215-225


46. As in Note 44.

47. BDN 11 Aug. 1964; Therisanyo, Aug. 1964.


Notes for pages 225-241
Peter Fawcus. A variant offered by Quill Hermans (to Parsons in 1993) has Seretse strolling and talking with Sir Russell England - the perpetrator of the phrase 'nigger in the woodpile'.

Chapter 10: PRIME MINISTER, 1965-66
7. BDN 13 April & 3, 4 & 5 May 1965.
12. BDN 19 April, item 599 & 22 April 1965, item 618.
1. BDN 13 April 1965, item 579, 14 May, item 777 & 18 May, items 798 & 799. See also Mafeking Mail 6 May 1966 for Seretse appealing to Europeans to stay.
1. BDN 23 June 1965, items 1056 & 1057.
17. BDN 6 May 1965, item 720.
Chapter 11:
PRESIDENT, 1966-69
1. Mafeking Mail Fri 7 Oct. 1966, p.4, notes 'Seven armed infiltrators were captured near Kasane and are detailed in Francistown pending investigations.' Cf. Africa Confidential, 1967/1 (Jan. 1967), pp.5-6; BNA - OP 1/9/3054 (SP.37/1-I) & 1/9/3037 (SP.37/8-I); BP D8/1094 (S.13/15/1).
6. BNA - OP 1/8/3037 (SP 37/6-11): Cabinet Information Note CAB/INF/131 by M.P.K. Nwako, Minister of State, 11 Feb. 1968; 'Botswana settles 2 000 fugitives'
7. BDN Tues 16 May, item 1010/67 & Mon 5 June 1967, item 1153/67.

Notes for pages 264-279
34. BNA - BNB 6634: The World (Johannesburg) 20 May 1966, on marriage of Kgosi Linchwe II & Princess Makao (Cathy) Nono Motsepe 111.
36. See Chapter 14, Notes 61-65.
42. BDN Thurs 9 May 1968, item 936/68; Tues 18 March 1969.
46. BDN Wed 3 April, item 612/68, Mon. 11 July 1968, p.2; Fri 25 April & Thurs 11 Dec. 1969.

Notes for pages 279-292

Chapter 12:
STATESMAN, 1969-74
5. BNA - OP 1/8/3034.

&BN: President Seretse Khama to President Kenneth Kaunda 31 March 1970 - citing correspondence with Prime Minister Harold Wilson.
President Khama minute to Permanent Secretary to President re. Botswana-Zambia boundary n.d.; BDN 8 July 1970.


Notes for pages 292-310


Chapter 13: FRONT-LINE LEADER, 1974-76
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Notes for pages 310-327
15. BDN 17 Aug., 8 Nov., 4 Dec. 1973; 6 Nov. 1974; Parsons interview with
16. BDN 29 Oct. 1971. 17. 'President explains Botswana's policy on S.A.racism'
1974.
18. BDN 14 & 18 March 1975; Henderson interview with Philip Steenkamp, 13
April 1983. See John Bruwer, For the President's
Eyes Only (Johannesburg 1973?). 19. BDN 19 March & 4 April 1975. Cf. BDN
1 April 1977.
ibid p.120.
22. BDN 29 & 30 April, 9 May 1975; 10 Feb. 1976; Benn, Diaries 1963-76,
London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson and Michael Joseph, 1979, p.161; BDN 22 April
1975.
BDN 19 Nov. 1974; 7 April, 25, 30 & 31 July, 1 Aug., 22 Dec. 1975. 28. BDN 8
30. BDN 28 Nov. 1975. 31. Stories circulated in diplomatic circles, ringing alarm
bells as far away as Downing Street, of a diabetic or alcoholic fit at State House in
which Seretse is said to have seized a pistol and waved it around - Parsons
interview with Lady Khama, 24 April 1983; Henderson interview with Baledzi
1977.
1976; The Times 5 March 1976; Department of Broadcasting & Information,
from David Martin (Harare) 29 Sept. 1983.
40. BDN 25 & 29 March 1976. 41. BDN 13, 14 & 23 April 1976; President
Khama in India 1976 Gaborone: Botswana
Notes for pages 327-344
Information Services, 1976 (46 pp.); Henderson interview with Merriweather, 1
Zaffiro, 'The U.S. and Botswana in the 1990s', Journal of Contemporary African
Studies, vol.10 no.1 (1991), [pp.18-44], p.28. William E. Schaufele, the U.S.
Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs 1975-77, respected Seretse as 'not
one to engage in polemics ... his impact in his low-key and understated manner

Chapter 14: MIXED FORTUNES, 1976-78

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Notes for pages 344-355


47. Henderson interview with David Anderson, n.d.

Notes for pages 355-369


Notes for pages 370-382
Chapter 15:
FULL CIRCLE, 1979-80


Notes for pages 382-393


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NP/Phinehas McIntosh, Serowe, interview 12 Oct. 1984.
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TT/Gaboipolwe Otsile, Serowe, n.d. [c. 1984].
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(ii) Northern Divisional Intelligence (Committee) Reports (NDIC/NDIR): (1953-61:) DCN 2/10, 12/13, 9/6, 9/4, 9/8, 12/11, 9/7, 9/3 (iii) Other DivCommNorth files: DCN 1/1, 2/3, 3/6, 3/14, 6/12, 8/4, 8/5, 9/1, 12/8, 13/7.
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G President Seretse Khwma gave very great service to Africa, to the cause of freedom in Africa, and to the development of human dignity for all Africans - whatever their colour, race or religion... Seretse was my friend. It was a joy to work with him in the tasks of Africa. 

Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere in the Epilogue to this book.
The romance of Seretse Khama and Ruth Williams in the late 1940s and early 1950s is remembered by millions of people, as one of the great love stories of the twentieth century. The story brought home to people in the rest of the world the realities of colonial life and racial discrimination in Africa.

Seretse Khama was born the heir to a famous royal line in the British colonial territory of Bechuanaland (now Botswana). In 1948 he married an English woman while a student in London. Because of objections to the marriage by white settlers in southern Africa, Seretse Khana was disinherited and exiled in Britain - first by a Labour government, then by a Conservative government.

Returning home from exile as a commoner in 1956, Seretse Khama rose to become President of the fledgling Republic of Botswana. Under his leadership, Botswana developed from one of the poorest nations in the world into a stable and prosperous non-racial democracy. Seretse Khana also had the vision to look forward to a post-apartheid future, becoming one of the Front-Line leaders who pushed for the liberation of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. He was the main initiator of what is today known as the Southern African Development Community.

This book offers a uniquely detailed insight into the life and times of Seretse Khama - throwing new light on the history of Botswana, on the societies of southern Africa, and on British politics in the era of decolonization.

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