

AFRICA IN 1960

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WELL, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan is back; back for a few days in Downing Street before he goes off again, back from his jaunt to Paris just before Christmas. And now Prime Minister Harold Macmillan is off again, this time for a whole month, this time to Africa.

Why Africa? What is his concern in Africa? For the same reason that nearly every speaker from the floor in the Labour Party Blackpool conference had Africa on his lips, that every newspaper has items nearly every day (it used to be about once a month) on Africa, that the Monckton Commission on Central Africa took up the time of the Parliamentary Labour Party in the first week of December, that the main business of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in October, 1959, was also Central Africa, that the Royal Consort, the Duke of Edinburgh, had to fly out in November to Ghana in West Africa, whither at the insistence of Dr. Nkrumah, the Queen too, once the expected royal babe is weaned, will take flight in 1961; and, finally, that in the City of London a hundred boards of directors of very big firms never stop pondering and counting over their investments in Africa. Africa is the target of all attention. Why?

The continent of Africa is in the forefront because the peoples of Africa are now in the forefront of the struggle to end colonialism. Africa, thrice the size of Europe, after being for three centuries the centre of the slave-trade whose profits built up European capitalism (and particularly British capitalism) has in this last hundred years been divided up amongst the European powers as their colonial territories to be plundered and 'developed' as sources of raw materials and cheap labour: divided up and then re-divided by the first world war of 1914-18 and the second world war of 1939-45. There was the German Empire in Africa (Tanganyika in East Africa, Cameroons and Togoland in West Africa, and territories in South-West Africa): and France and Britain whose empires reached their greatest extent in 1919, shared out the booty at the Treaty of Versailles. There was the Italian Empire (Tripoli and Cyrenaica in North Africa, Eritrea and Ethiopia and Somaliland in North-East Africa)—all gone by the end of 1945. There remained the British, French, Belgian, Spanish and Portuguese Empires in Africa, made up of colonies, protectorates and mandated territories.

THE CONTINENT OF AFRICA

Independent African States

In 1959

MOROCCO

TUNISIA

LIBYA

EGYPT

SUDAN

ETHIOPIA

GHANA

GUINEA

LIBERIA (in 1940 the only independent
African state)

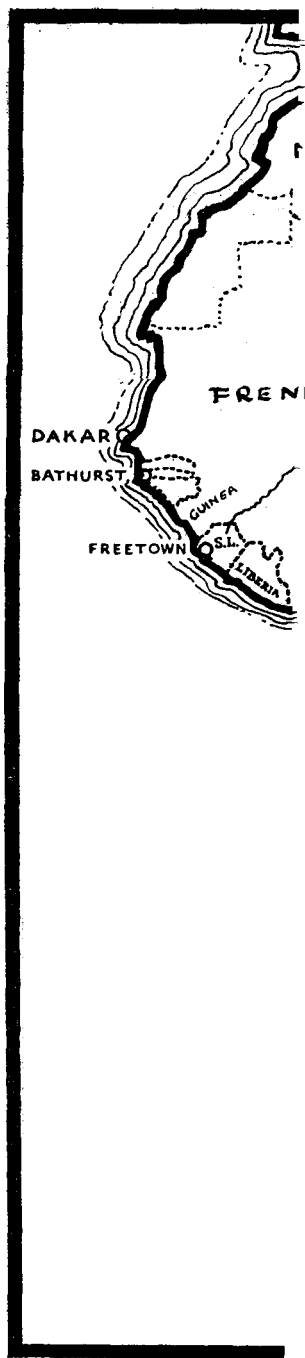
In 1960 add:

NIGERIA

SOMALILAND

CAMEROONS

TOGOLAND





For how long would they remain? The answer has come very quickly. Not by external war with rivals but by the internal pressure of the once subjected peoples of Africa, the chains have been broken, first in one place, then in another. The vaunted empires are crumbling from within. Africa, once the happy hunting ground both of the exterminators of big game and of the exploiters of human beings, is on the way to become the possession of its own peoples. On the way only—for great struggles lie ahead: but the struggles for emancipation are in progress.

The Africans saw how the peoples of Asia got their political independence from 1945 onwards; saw from 1950 onwards how the greatest of the Asian countries, China, had not only thrown over imperialist domination but was linked with the other countries of socialism; saw in these last two years the spectacular socialist advance of over a third of mankind. The movement for national liberation spread in Africa and gathered speed gaining momentum from the Afro-Asian conference of April, 1955, at Bandung in Indonesia, from the eight-day conference in Ghana of eight Independent African States in April, 1958, from the Accra conference of all African peoples in December, 1958, and from every kind of struggle. Already along the northern coast of Africa, the southern shores of the Mediterranean are studded with countries that have gained their independence—and only in Algeria is the struggle unfinished. Already on the west coast of Africa political independence (though not yet economic independence) has been gained in these last three years by Ghana and by Guinea, by one state after another, from both the British and French imperialists, who elsewhere are being compelled to make such concessions in the way of electoral rights (mostly trifling) and execute such other manoeuvres as they hope will stave off the fatal day when their political domination comes to an end. And meantime there have been revolts in the Belgian Congo in January, 1959, in its mandated territory of Ruanda-Urundi in November, 1959, and in other parts of equatorial Africa.

But even more significant than the sectional advance of the various peoples in Africa is the most recent change, the development of a common consciousness amongst all the arising nations of the Continent. Not only was this clearly set forth in the resolutions of the Accra Conference* of December, 1958 (attended by

*The fraternal address of Dr. DuBois, the 90-year-old leader of United States Negroes, was printed in *Labour Monthly* of February, 1959.

representatives of 62 organisations from 28 countries), but the leadership there elected has striven to co-ordinate all African struggles, while at the end of November there was formed an All-African Federation of Trade Unions. Further, only last autumn the five-day conference of *nine* independent African States—Liberia, Ghana, Guinea, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt (United Arab Republic), Sudan and Ethiopia—resolved at their meeting in Liberia to call upon ‘the conscience of the world and the United Nations’ to help dependent territories to achieve independence, while the Conference received a significant message from Under-Secretary of State Douglas Dillon stating that they could count ‘on the help and understanding of the U.S.A. for the legitimate aspirations of the African peoples’. Thus, to all the nations of Africa the call for independence has sounded both from Accra and from the nine states which will be twelve in number this year 1960 when Nigeria and the mandated territories of French Cameroons and Somaliland reach their goal. If the African struggle for national liberation reached a great height in 1959 it is fairly certain that the upsurge in 1960 will be even greater. It is high time, think the imperialists, that Prime Minister Macmillan should undertake an African journey.

BRITISH AFRICA

The parts of Africa under the British crown, thirty times the size of the United Kingdom, are conventionally put in four main divisions:

West Africa (Nigeria alone four times the size of the United Kingdom with 34,000,000 inhabitants).

East Africa (over seven times the size of the United Kingdom and comprising Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar).

Central Africa (three territories, in all amounting to five times the size of the United Kingdom).

Southern Africa (comprising the Union of South Africa, which has annexed also South-West Africa in defiance of the United Nations and covets the three High Commission territories of Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland).

In less than twenty territories thus geographically arranged there is, as in the rest of Africa, every kind of society from primitive relations to capitalist relations; hunting, pastoral and agricultural peoples; with different languages, religions and customs; different forms of internal government and different forms of government imposed upon them, with every gradation of direct and indirect rule—all beneath their growing common consciousness as Africans,

but all making the task of national liberation extremely complex. And more recently there is the complexity of the concessions wrung from the imperialists, ranging from minor (and often paltry) forms of representation up to what used to be called 'dominion status'—and it is only to these last that Macmillan is paying his visit. But however complicated and diverse the conditions—and a similar diversity in India was always used by the imperialists, notably in the Simon Commission of 1930, as a knockdown argument against political independence—there is one broad and clear distinction in British Africa which gives the clue to all the problems, both actual and factitious. This is the distinction between the territories blessed with European settlers and those without this encumbrance. Look at the map of Africa, or think of the recent history of Africa. Where have the sharp conflicts and savage repressions taken place? Precisely in Kenya (seven years Emergency rule from 1952 till a month ago), in Central Africa (especially in the last two years) and in the Union of South Africa—the lands under the domination of the white intruders into Africa.

Why did they go just to these places and not to every land of Africa under the Union Jack? The answer would be a long history, a tale of battle, murder and sudden death; but, briefly, they went to healthy and sunny climes where the land was good and could be got easily often by force or fraud. But there they are, these land-grabbers; and where they are there is trouble, abundant trouble for all concerned, colour-bar, forced labour, penal laws, emergency proclamations, and 'police states'. In Kenya, where the end of the seven years 'emergency' has just been proclaimed a few months after the Hola-hola prison camp atrocities brought shame upon the name of Lennox-Boyd, the Tory Secretary for the Colonies, and where Jomo Kenyatta, after his long captivity, is still denied his right to move freely within his own country, the white settlers in the Highlands are there entrenched to frustrate the claim of the Africans to proper representation. This month in London Tom Mboya, Odinga and other African leaders will find the Colonial Office stubbornly opposed to any claim that Kenya should follow in the footsteps of Ghana and Nigeria. Before the people of Kenya there stretches a period of long and difficult struggle—because of the settlers, because of that one per cent in a total Kenya population of six-and-a-half millions. Only 63,000 of them! Why, they would all fit into fifteen ocean liners, or into three liners making five voyages. Macmillan, however, on his African journey is leaving Kenya severely alone.

The Prime Minister is going only to the four states that are this year members of the British Commonwealth—namely, Ghana, Nigeria, and the two 'settler dominions' of central and south Africa. Ghana (independent in 1957) and Nigeria (independent in 1960) are two lands without settlers: and to refuse their political demands, to repress their national liberation movements throughout the 'fifties would have meant huge armies of occupation (there are half-a-million French troops in Algeria with one-quarter of the population) and a strain greater than the British government could bear. So, willy-nilly, after years of manœuvring, the political concessions that could not have been withheld, have been made: and now all that the Prime Minister can do is to be as polite as possible, hoping that they will be the same.

It is the opposite extreme when he gets to the Union of South Africa, where the Dutch, British and other European settlers are over a fifth of the total population and deprive the Africans of civil rights, proclaiming the fascist doctrine of *Apartheid*. This *Apartheid* or 'segregation of the coloured natives from the whites' means much more than segregation and is actually the setting up of the institutions of a slave state. The dilemma for Macmillan is clear. It was put to him in the House of Commons by the Labour opposition in the first week of December. Is he going there to approve *Apartheid* or condemn it? His *avant-courier* Field Marshal Montgomery is reported in November there to have given his approval. The Prime Minister gave no answer in parliament. Nor did he state his purpose in visiting the three High Commission territories abutting on the Union of South Africa. One of them, Basutoland, has been a place of refuge for Mrs. Mafekeng, the hunted president of the African Food and Canning Workers' Union,* whose persecution has brought a resolution of protest from the Labour Party and has been an obvious factor in getting the T.U.C. General Council to consider (only 'to consider' so far) whether or not South African goods should be put under boycott, as the Africans themselves demand. Is Macmillan going to do a deal with the *Apartheid*-mongers, by which Basutoland (and Swaziland and Bechuanaland) would be handed over to them to exploit, while they in turn would engage to defer for a time their cherished plans of breaking with the British Crown? The answer to such-like questions, however, was given already in the United Nations

*In her message from Basutoland published December 9 Mrs. Mafekeng said :

To all food and canning workers I say stand firm and rally yourselves around the workers' organisations. Not even deportations or banishments of your leaders will stop you from fighting for better conditions in your country.

Assembly two months ago. Sixty-seven nations cast their vote against the *Apartheid*-mongers' behaviour in South Africa. Three only voted for, namely, de Gaulle's France, fascist Portugal and the representative of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, headed by Harold Macmillan.

Meanwhile, as if in answer to the 67 to 3 vote of the United Nations, the South African cabinet have chosen (and the Queen has accepted the choice) no other than Mr. Swart as the new Governor-General. This Swart, as Minister of Justice, rigged up the notorious treason trial of nearly two hundred political opponents which, going on for the last two years and more, has brought protest after protest, even from *The Times*. This Swart is the sjambok-man, who holds that Africans must be governed 'by the whip'. This latter-day Simon Legree is now to be the Queen's representative—about a hundred years after the Government of Her Majesty (then Queen Victoria) was busily engaged in the abolition of the slave trade in Africa.

The continent of Africa, with its growing struggle for national liberation, is the scene of Macmillan's journey. But behind the scenes and below the stage settings there is machinery at work, machinery that is powered in the City of London. The underlying realities on the imperialist side are the interests of the big firms, the big banks and the big investment companies. Their interests (and the interests of the other imperialists in their respective finance centres) are spread all over the continent, alike among colonial dependencies and independent states. Their agents are in parliament, and leading figures of the Tory Party are deeply involved as shareholders in many of these monopolies. Therefore, while the struggle for political independence is coming on fast, there is a further struggle ahead—for economic independence and the right to build up their own resources.

The Central African Federation will be treated in a separate article.

THESE 'REBELLIOUS NATIVES'

The Dunfermline weavers are enemies to subordination. So prevalent is the levelling spirit that few of the labourers or tradesmen will lift their Scots bonnet or shew any mark of respect to those of the higher class.

(From a letter by Lord Dundonald to the
Lord Advocate, January 16, 1793.)