

The African Scene

In speaking of the present state of Africa it will be necessary to limit oneself severely by designating the areas about which information is fairly reliable. In the case of the present writer, these areas are the Sudan, the Belgian Congo, the Rhodesias, East and South Africa.

All these are, at the time of writing, territories which present a bewildering picture. One exception within the general framework is Tanganyika, where the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), under the leadership of Mr Julius Nyerere, has achieved at least the appearance of stability and gives some promise of steady development. In Tanganyika there is something, or perhaps one should say someone, to work for, as Mr Nyerere is 'the necessary man.' His prestige, integrity and ability combine to give him a unique position in to-day's Africa, and he provides a rallying-point for the one hundred and forty African tribes of his country and a head of government whom Europeans and Asians can support with a fairly clear conscience. The indications are, on the other hand, that he alone stands between Tanganyika and chaos. There is no one to replace him should any untoward event remove him from the scene.

The Sudan is also overtly peaceful, but this is far more illusory, since the Muslim Military Government is pursuing a policy of ruthless suppression. Many of the former M.Ps. are in prison, including at least one priest, and these prisoners are the representatives of the Southern Sudan, a territory entirely different in race, language and culture from the Muslim North. It is a region of primitive Nilotics, the field of most of the Catholic missions, whose situation is very precarious.

At the moment the Belgian Congo occupies the forefront of the world view of Africa and the murder of Patrice Lumumba is the most vivid of the latest developments. It has, of course, accomplished nothing except to make the eventual solution of the political problem far more difficult. Here the modern African situation can be observed in an exaggerated form. The elements of it can be roughly distinguished. First, the Belgian Congo is a very large and diversified territory, equal in area to the whole of Western Europe. Secondly, large sections of the African population hate one another and have hitherto only been prevented by an alien domination from making this hatred felt. Thirdly, this alien domination has been removed but the European influence is still felt as the Africans are familiar with European ways of life and equipment. Fourthly, this familiarity is only sufficient to give the Africans an appetite for these things, not the ability to secure and use them. Fifthly, most African politicians talk arrant and damaging nonsense.

The attitude of Africans to Europeans is ambivalent. With loud cries they demand the end of 'Imperialism' while with somewhat more muted insistence they require missionaries, doctors and teachers to remain and serve them. Aware

that only a tiny percentage of modern equipment is produced indigenously, they demand vast overseas investments in their under-developed countries, investments which are to be absolutely under their own control. Meanwhile, within the boundaries imposed by the partition of Africa some eighty years ago, long-hostile factions bicker with one another so that, as a particularly intelligent African said to me recently, 'the situation is non-existent.'

Across the Mountains of the Moon from the Belgian Congo, the inland Protectorate of Uganda potentially reproduces the Congo situation with important modifications. In the centre of the country, an enclave within an enclave, the Kingdom of Buganda has nominally seceded from the Protectorate and denounced the attempt to set up a central elected government for all Uganda. This secession is the work of a small, unrepresentative clique surrounding the Kabaka but, like the murderers of Lumumba, they have made the eventual political settlement much more difficult.

The situation is not made easier by a British Government (resident on Buganda territory) which can best be described as paralytic. The parties in Uganda are busy denouncing one another as Catholic or Protestant, Imperialist or Communist gangs, and tribal differences away from the centre are no less virulent. 'We will never rest,' cried Mr Joseph Kiwanuka (not to be confused with Mgr Joseph Kiwanuka, the new Metropolitan of Uganda), 'until we have driven the Imperialists from the country.' This was in connection with the Lumumba affair for which, apparently, he held the British responsible. Yet if the 'Imperialists' depart there will scarcely be an efficient administrator, technician or secretary-typist in the country. When one more resignation is announced from the University College of East Africa the students grow still more alarmed as to who is to teach them, but they have not yet seen the point that to claim to be able to rule, but not to teach, does not make sense; for the latter is far easier. They held a meeting to denounce the murder of Lumumba, but not one to denounce Mr Kiwanuka. On the news that a European diocesan was about to be replaced by an African the former's residence was besieged by grief-stricken Africans. 'But he will never do what you have done for us,' they cried. Africanization in this, as in other spheres, means the replacement of white by black men who have seemingly picked up the worst features of their masters without their effectiveness. Given the length of our rule, it is a discreditable legacy. Africanization does not mean 'making Africa more African,' unfortunately.

The situation in Uganda is, however, vastly better than that in the Congo. In the Protectorate education has for some time risen to university level, there are no 'settlers,' no brutality, no colour-bar; there has been an overt intention for years of achieving independence, granted an agreed constitution. If this is Imperialism, it is an odd thing for Africans to denounce. In the Belgian Congo there was an open policy of retaining Africans at a minor level of education; there was a very large 'settled' population; there was much harshness, to use a euphemism; there was a strict colour-bar; whereupon the Belgian government abdicated its entire responsibilities within the space of six months. The only

hope for Africa is to make Africans face realities, and this cannot be done while all the real work is being done by Europeans, but the Belgian volte-face, in its irresponsible suddenness, merits the reprobation of the world.

In Kenya the situation is tense. There is reliable information that a recrudescence of Mau-Mau is being planned; there are rumours of gun-running through the Northern territories and natural alarm at the violence of the politicians' speeches. This alarm is felt also by the non-Kikuyu tribes who fear an attempt by that large and able minority to dominate the political scene. The assertion of growing Communist infiltration is now being made by others than missionaries, who have long attached that label to any African activity which fails to correspond to the standards of 1911.

The situation in Nyasaland and the Rhodesias has been fully, though necessarily confusingly, reported in the English newspapers. The confusion comes from the fact that these territories have, like those in East Africa, been acquired piecemeal, on different pretexts, vary greatly in the proportion of Africans to Whites, in their constitutional relations to Great Britain and in their economic and strategic importance. Beyond them lies South Africa, where a resolute government implements a ruthless policy. The main strength, as well as weakness, of Dr Verwoerd and his followers lies in their clear determination to maintain the present White control; they know what they want and why they want it. Very few Britons know why their relations are in Africa and their elected representatives would therefore hate to be pressed to give them a reason and formulate an African policy. Hence muddle, ineffectiveness and surrender.

On the African side the confusion is equally great, for the Africans have, to a large extent, learned their political vocabulary from the inarticulate British but have not had sufficient social intercourse with them to acquire the intuitive British realism. So they talk nonsense, which would not matter so much if what they did was sensible. But they are not good at getting things done and this is going to be the hardest, as well as the most necessary, thing for them to learn. If Tanganyika can give an example of the maintenance of public order and the other territories bid fair to emulate it, the Whites can abdicate their dominion with a fairly easy conscience. It is a large 'if.' Realism compels one to add the following warning. Recently a young African administrator assured me that, after independence, the African states would make war on South Africa. 'Make sure, then,' I said, 'that you win your war. Otherwise South Africa will rule from the Cape to the Congo.' So far the wind of change has not prevailed against cold steel.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.