

# AFRICA

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## *Notes on Current Events*

by SOL DUBULA

### **Banda—Traitor to Africa!**

DR. BANDA, THE Malawi President, is doing everything to qualify for Tshombe's role as the most hated man in Africa.

There was a time when Banda took every opportunity to present himself as a relentless foe of White supremacy. He made wild and demagogic speeches castigating the crimes of the Whites in Africa. He combined this with snide remarks against other African leaders whom he regarded as 'moderate' or 'soft' on the White rulers. Many experienced politicians detected an opportunist tendency in Banda's ultra revolutionary declamations.

First cautiously and then more boldly Dr. Banda revealed his true colours. He entered into relations with Salazar and Portugal. Subsequently he refused to join in the condemnation of the illegal regime of Ian Smith which has gaoled many leaders whom he was fond of criticising in Zimbabwe. Now he has committed the cardinal sin of establishing economic and other relations with the government that hates African independence and progress most—the Republic of South Africa under Vorster. By sending three ministers to the Republic to sign a trade agreement Banda has defied the resolutions of the O.A.U. and the United Nations which Malawi is obliged to honour. Like a thief caught in the act Banda has compounded his crime by making speeches insulting to the African states and to the peoples of Africa. He says 'South Africa is there to stay'.

A number of African leaders in Southern Africa of whom Banda is the most notorious seem to have forgotten that the majority of the

people in South Africa are totally opposed to the apartheid regime and are pledged to destroy it by revolutionary means. It is these people—the oppressed and voteless people of South Africa whose interests are paramount. The future destiny of the country lies in their hands. They are South Africa.

The freedom-loving peoples of South Africa are viewing the activities of their brothers and sisters in the neighbouring independent states with close attention. With thousands of their people in the gaols of South Africa they cannot but wonder at the policies some of the neighbouring independent states are following.

Admittedly some of these states are under serious economic pressure from the reactionaries in the Republic of South Africa. An expensive 'new look' foreign policy has been launched by South Africa to woo these states and to transform them into neo-colonies. As part of this policy flattery and bribery of prominent personalities in African states is being pursued. Within South Africa itself African ministers from independent states are treated to the red carpet and housed in hotels reserved for Whites Only. So-called relaxations have been announced in the rigid racial laws relating to sports outside South Africa. Vorster the fascist hangman is portrayed in the White press as an amiable golfer.

The people of South Africa have experienced similar gestures before. Every new attack on the rights of the majority has been accompanied by a flourish of trumpets and fanfare by the White supremacists and their supporters. The present noisy activity on the internal and foreign fields are a stratagem to defend White supremacy from the challenge posed by the emergence of African states and the growth of the guerilla movement in Southern Africa . . . in Mozambique, Angola, South-West Africa, Zimbabwe and in South Africa itself.

Banda and other African leaders like him may be prepared to sell out millions of people for the sake of the privilege of staying in 'whites only' hotels in South Africa. But the question they should ask themselves is what relations will exist between their countries and a future Democratic People's Republic of South Africa.

On June 26th, 1959, the African National Congress passed a resolution in Durban calling for the launching of an international campaign for the boycott of South Africa. That campaign has grown until it embraces numerous aspects in the military, economic, diplomatic, social and cultural fields. A great solidarity movement in support of the struggle of the people of South Africa exists in the world. Whilst recognising that in the final analysis the apartheid regime will be overthrown by themselves, the South African oppressed peoples greatly appreciate international solidarity and will never forget the peoples

of the world for their support. It is the South African people themselves who called for the isolation of the hated racialist regime in South Africa. Organisations and states outside South Africa are merely carrying out the wish of the African and other oppressed people in the Republic itself. As the South African racists now try to escape from the consequences of the boycott campaign, pressure on them should be increased still further. To do otherwise is to help the White minority government to oppress all Africans in South Africa and elsewhere.

### **Lesotho after the Coup**

ON DECEMBER 27th last year the police in Lesotho under the direct orders of the government shot at and killed innocent people attending a meeting called by the Head of State, Moshoeshe II.

Following the massacre Premier Leabua Jonathan ordered the arrest of 167 people, deported several others including practically every lawyer practising in the country; and placed the King himself under house-arrest.

With his fingers virtually dripping with the blood of innocent Basotho, Leabua Jonathan proceeded to Capetown where he paid his respects to the notorious fascist Prime Minister of the Republic of South Africa—B. J. Vorster.

Many people have wondered as to what the background to the coup in Lesotho was. Those who sought enlightenment from the press in South Africa or in the imperialist countries were doomed to disappointment. With infinite skill the mass media of the imperialists clouded the issues in Lesotho in talk about an alleged 'constitutional conflict' between the Head of State, Moshoeshe II and Premier Leabua Jonathan.

It is true that the problem could be described in part as 'constitutional'. But this was simply because any differences of policy involving the Head of State affect the distribution of power in the state as enshrined in the constitution. In fact the basic issue was over control over the land of Lesotho including its water and mineral resources. Leabua resents the traditional system of land tenure which gives the Head of State final say in the allocation of any rights in the land. The South African financial and other interests who would like to lay hands on the resources of Lesotho were insisting that the power of the King over land was an obstacle to investment and capital development of the country. These interests were demanding the introduction of the system of private freehold land-holding in Lesotho in certain areas of the country at least.

In addition to the land issue, however, there were others of vital importance.

Before independence steps had already been taken to ensure that Basotho would fill all important posts in the administration. Leabua Jonathan's government which does not trust the Lesotho civil service has taken steps to undo all the preparations made by dismissing or transferring senior officials who were suspect in the eyes of the government. This has caused widespread dissatisfaction as it meant not only retention of the old White officials but also the importation of many others from the Republic of South Africa.

Although it was expected that Lesotho by reason of its position as an enclave in the middle of South Africa would have to maintain some relations with the apartheid regime, the shameful actions of the Leabua government have been a humiliation to the proud Basotho nation which has never bowed its knee to an invader. In every important aspects of foreign policy Leabua has followed the diktat of the Republic of South Africa to the letter. No diplomatic relations have been established with any states which are anathema to the South African authorities. Even the African states have not been encouraged to establish embassies in Lesotho. Although Lesotho is a member of the O.A.U., the Commonwealth and the United Nations, government ministers regularly hurl criticisms at these organisations with scant regard for their decisions and opinions. The language used by these Lesotho Ministers follows very closely that of their South African masters.

Naturally all this goes against the interests of the vast majority of the people in Lesotho who are totally opposed to the policy of Leabua Jonathan. Represented by the Congress Party, the Marematlou Freedom Party and other opposition groups including the Communist Party of Lesotho, the people gathered at huge mass meetings to condemn the turning of Lesotho into a client state of South Africa. It is with this background that Leabua Jonathan backed by his South African mentors decided to strike against all opposition in the country. The meeting of December 27th, 1965 at the sacred shrine of Thaba Bosiu seemed a favourable opportunity.

At the trials of government opponents held recently all accused except eight have already been acquitted and freed. The remaining eight who include Mr. Ntsu Mokhehle, leader of the Congress Party, and Dr. Seth Makotoko, leader of the Marematlou Freedom Party, are still facing an artificially prolonged and farcical trial whose aim is to ruin the opposition parties financially.

At the first session of parliament held since the coup the government has introduced a Bill to change the system of land tenure to provide for private freehold holdings. The system of taxation is to be altered so as to drastically increase the taxation of the people. Both these

measures will result in a tremendous increase in the number of Basotho forced to go to the South African mines to seek work. And last but not least a government delegation from South Africa has been to Maseru to discuss plans for the financing, building and control of the great Ox-Bow hydro-electric project.

It is said that the clue to the identity of a murderer can sometimes be found in the question 'who benefits?'. The measures recently introduced in the Lesotho Parliament give more than a clue as to the real reason why Leabua Jonathan sent police to go and kill innocent Basotho at Thaba Bosiu in December last year. There is no doubt that the people of Lesotho will one day exact full retribution for these crimes against the people by Leabua Jonathan and his confederates.

## **Nigeria—the Crisis Deepens**

THE RECENT MOVES in Eastern Nigeria by its military Governor Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu marks a further important stage in Nigeria's growing crisis. The latest Eastern Nigerian edict requires the payment to the Eastern Nigerian treasury of all revenues collected in the region which in the past had been paid to the Federal Government.

Among the reasons advanced by Eastern Nigeria for this move is that the Federal military authorities had betrayed its undertakings under the Aburi (Ghana) agreements to pay the salaries of refugee civil servants up to May 31st, 1967. The Eastern Region also, so it is claimed, needs the revenue to 'cater for and rehabilitate' the 1,800,000 people who were displaced from other parts of Nigeria by various means including violence of appalling proportions.

Another decree of an even more radical character vests in the Eastern Region all important Federal installations within its borders including ports, railways, post and bodies connected with broadcasting, coal, shipping and marketing. At the same time Colonel Ojukwu has made it clear that while the region would not take any steps to secede, this final resort might be forced on it if the Federal Government attacked the Region and this included an economic blockade. The counter measures taken by the Federal authorities including the suspension of certain air services has evoked the statement from Colonel Ojukwu that 'We are close to the limit of our tolerance . . . the grip around our throats is almost complete'.

It is difficult to forecast with any degree of confidence what the precise outcome of the conflict will be. One thing is clear and that is that the popular enthusiasm which greeted the events of January 15th, 1966, when the corrupt Federal Government was toppled by the military, created the hope that at last this most populous and potentially

rich African state would be set on the road to real progress and independence. Instead, most of the young leaders of the first coup are still behind prison bars and political expression by the mass of the ordinary people has throughout the country been muzzled.

As the Nigerian workers' leader Dr. Tunzi Otegbeye said in reference to the failures of the Ironsi regime (toppled in July 1966) 'Instead of summoning meetings of workers, peasants, market women, progressive intellectuals and patriotic businessmen the military regime summoned meetings of Emirs, Obis, Abas and Chiefs as if this class could speak for the Nigerian people'. These groups were allowed to meet in the open 'while the major organs of expression of the people were suppressed'. Despite this the Ironsi regime was in some measure influenced by the spirit behind the events of January 15th, 1966, and some attempt was made to introduce economic measures which showed promise of progress. 'But', said Dr. Otegbeye, 'a programme which is national in outlook and democratic in form will need a new alignment of ruling classes to put it into force. This new alliance must of necessity be anti-imperialist and anti-feudal. Compromising with reactionary forces to work a progressive economic programme is doomed to failure.'

These words ring true. So long as the fate of the Nigerian people is being juggled about by élite groups and their advisers, so long will the chaos become more profound. Those who thought that the indiscriminate prohibition of all political groupings would create a power vacuum which would make it possible to lay the basis for change, have paid very dearly for their mistake. The laws relating to social development—like the laws of nature—abhor a vacuum. Where the people are barred from asserting themselves, then it is those elements who thrive on backdoor conspiracy and manipulation that come into their own.

The horror of the massacres in the North is still fresh in our memory. No doubt future historians will be able to fully document the view that the killings were not completely spontaneous events and that they suited very well the purposes of those who fear a real united Nigeria with a forward-looking social and economic policy. Despite the scars which the massacres have left, there can be no doubt that if the mass enthusiasm spirit which the January 15th coup evoked were to be allowed free rein, a real beginning could be made to the building of a truly democratic Nigeria.

## **Sierra Leone—Once Again the Rifle Rules**

THE APPOINTMENT OF Mr. Siaka Stevens, the leader of the All-People's Congress (A.P.C.) as Prime Minister following the March 17th election in Sierra Leone was the signal for a series of events which led to the

military take-over. On March 23rd the 'National Reformation Council' consisting of senior army and police officers suspended the constitution, dissolved all political parties and prohibited all political activities. It proceeded to take over the functions of the Governor General, Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and Legislature. This move brought to an end the fifteen-year rule of the Sierra Leone People's Party (S.L.P.P.) led by Sir Albert Margai and followed the sweeping gains made in the election by the opposition All-People's Congress (A.P.C.) led by former miners' leader Mr. Siaka Stevens.

### **Somali Coast—A French-Manipulated Referendum**

OFFICIAL FRANCE WAS jubilant. The unpleasant welcome accorded to General de Gaulle on his last visit to Djibouti was, so it is now claimed, the expression of a minority. The announced results of the Referendum held on March 19th showed that 60.5 per cent of the electors voted for continued association with France under an amended constitution. The reaction of the French Minister of Overseas Territories, M. Pierre Billotte, unwittingly sounded like one of those pompous orations which military gentlemen make to a routed enemy. 'Let them forget their quarrels and let them remember only that they are French. . . . In the eyes of France, there is, in French unity, neither conqueror nor conquered. . . . It is a victory of good sense.'

In truth, it is a victory of diabolical manipulation and electoral fraud. A few days before the Referendum a White Paper issued by the Somali government pointed to the fact that the choice offered to the territory was prejudicial to a fair and reasonable outcome because the French Government had threatened that in the event of the majority voting *Non*, all economic and technical assistance would be withdrawn from the territory immediately. In addition the French authorities had refused to register about 5,000 residents of Djibouti, all of whom had residential qualifications. This figure of 5,000, plus another 3,000 Africans in the Djibouti area who had come of age since the last election and who were also refused registration, is of enormous significance when one has regard to the fact that the whole electoral roll consists of 39,024 voters.

In Djibouti itself, French troops and Legionnaires opened fire on people demonstrating against the announced Referendum results. Many were killed and wounded. The President of the People's Movement Party (P.M.P.), M. Mousa Idris and twelve members of the Territorial Assembly were arrested. Thousands of people of Somali origin were rounded up by police and troops and are being held in deportation camps. The French had been adamant in their refusal to allow a United

Nations team to act as observers of the Referendum which has since been described by Mogadishu Radio as 'the biggest fraud ever perpetrated against democracy'.

Even the respectable *Le Monde* wrote on March 21st, that during the Referendum 'without it being necessary to defraud openly here and there the climate of tension had become so intense and the pressures exerted . . . by majorities over minorities were so powerful, that the latter could not express themselves properly'. And the *New York Times* described the Referendum as 'confused, messy and in the end bloody, with familiar displays of brutality by the French Legion'.

The very formation of the question in the Referendum amounted to a form of blackmail with the French threatening to do what the Belgians had done in the Congo, that is, to leave the Somali coast in a state of chaos. This tactic was not new to the French—it was tried unsuccessfully when Guinea voted to break its association with France in the late fifties.

*L'Humanité* described the Referendum as 'a monstrous falsification' and pointed out that the consequences of the Djibouti drama risked being tragic far beyond the limits of French Somaliland. Some pertinent comments were also made by the *Tanzanian Nationalist* when it made the point that it was inconceivable in Africa today that a people could choose colonialism as against freedom and independence. It also referred to the fact that some 18,000 Somali women and 8,500 men qualified to vote were deliberately denied this right. 'Under such an atmosphere of total intimidation and a completely unchecked free hand of France to do any manipulations, could the people of Djibouti, particularly those in the rural areas who were denied even contact with their political leaders, have made a claim for independence?'

### **Zambia—A One-Party State?**

PRESIDENT KAUNDA HAS spoken of the possibility that Zambia may in the future move towards the setting up of a One-Party State. But this, he says, is dependent on a number of factors including the most important, which is the expression of the will of the electorate. He stated further that such a position could be brought about only through the polls and not through legislation. The whole question will apparently be considered more carefully after the next election. If it resulted in a victory for U.N.I.P., then, said President Kaunda, 'we will be able to have a One-Party State with a very happy and clear conscience'.

### **Botswana—Meat Strike**

BOTSWANA'S MAIN INDUSTRY—meat processing—was brought to a standstill by a strike by 950 workers at the Botswana Commission's



slaughterhouse at Lobatsi. The immediate cause of the strike was announced to be the workers' opposition to tax deductions from monthly pay packets.

## **Unliberated Areas—Guerilla Activity**

IN ADDITION TO the open armed conflict in Mozambique and Angola, there is increasing evidence that the other liberation movements of Southern Africa are pressing ahead with their announced plans of armed confrontation with the racialist autocracy. In Botswana it has been announced that Botswana police have encountered a group of armed guerillas in swamps near Seronga, along the Caprivi Strip border. The guerillas, according to the report, evaded the Botswana patrol, but in the process left behind some of its equipment, including Brenn guns, carbines, rounds of ammunition and food and medical supplies.

In South-West Africa, according to a report from Radio Salisbury on March 26th, the police were hunting for a group of ten terrorists who had entered the territory after a brush with a Botswana police patrol.

Meanwhile, in the Portuguese territories, the people's armies are monthly stepping up their military engagements and the drain on the Portuguese Government in both men and material is growing at an enormous rate. African military expenses account today for more than 40 per cent of the Portuguese budget. Portugal admits to having suffered 200 soldiers killed in Portuguese Guinea alone in 1966. In this small territory, most of which is now under the control of the liberation forces, Portugal maintains 22,000 troops at the cost of more than £10 million a year.

F.L.I.N.G. (the Front for National Independence of Guinea—Bissao) published a communiqué in which it claims that in 1966 its guerilla forces had killed 554 Portuguese soldiers and wounded 319. The seriousness with which Portugal regards the Guinea situation is demonstrated by Dr. Salazar's recent decision to send his Defence Minister to the territory to reassess the whole situation.

## **Company Profits**

BRITISH-AMERICAN TOBACCO with three associated companies in West Africa (Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria) announced increased profits from Africa as well as from other areas. Profits rose from £82,005,000 (1964/65) to £91,625,000 (1966/67).