

**Joe Matthews writes**

**about the**

# **SIXTH PAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE**



**T**here are many reasons why the Pan-African Congress due to be held on the 8-12th December this year is more significant than any previous conference of its kind.

Ever since the great American Negro thinker and freedom fighter Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois founded the Pan-African Congress in 1919 it never held a meeting on African soil. This will thus be the first Pan-African Congress to meet on the continent itself. That alone would be sufficient to render the conference memorable.

But of even greater importance is the fact that at this conference representatives of liberation movements from all over Africa will be present. Already at the fifth Congress this development was foreshadowed. Among the delegates were Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah. At this Congress representation of the continent will be complete.

For obvious historical reasons it was not possible to hold previous Pan-African Congresses in Africa. With virtually the whole of Africa under the control of foreign imperialist governments there could be no venue in Africa itself. This naturally tended to restrict representation at such Congresses and meant that the leading was very often in the hands of persons who were not in actual contact with conditions throughout Africa.

It may well be asked whether the calling of the Pan-African Congress at this particular stage in world history is timely. Bearing in mind the vastness of the continent (the second largest) and the great variety of problems faced by its peoples will it be possible for a common message to emerge from the Congress? What are the real problems with which the Congress will have to deal, and in what international setting is a solution of those problems called for?

Over three hundred years ago the traffic in African lives was launched by the so-called Western Christian nations of Europe. The slave trade involved the removal from Africa of millions of her sons and daughters and their transportation to the Americas. It must be borne in mind that the slaves who were thus bought, transported to the Americas and sold were not the worst representatives of their race. On the contrary the best equipped physically and mentally were required as slaves. A continent's greatest asset is its people and it can therefore be imagined what harm the slave trade inflicted on Africa. It is estimated that 100 million Africans left the shores of Africa during the period of the slave trade.

Much of the development of modern capitalism is historically closely linked with the slave trade and this can never be forgotten by the African people.

Not satisfied with the tremendous human and material damage done in Africa through the slave trade, the Western powers barely 80 years ago organised the so-called Scramble for Africa. Sitting in the gilded chancelleries of the European powers, foreign statesmen discussed the best manner by which Africa could be divided amongst the countries they variously represented.

Since then the destinies of the people of Africa were not in their own hands.

It needs to be said that not only Africa but the whole world and its peoples were under control by the same metropolitan states, Germany, Britain, Belgium, France, Portugal, Spain, United States. The whole world was controlled and exploited for the benefit of small privileged groups in these imperialist states.

The first breach in the system of imperialism occurred in 1917 with the great October Revolution. For the first time there came into existence a state irrevocably opposed to imperialism, colonialism and racial discrimination. In the place of the tsarist "Prison of Nationalities" there was created the multi-national, united, equal Soviet Republics.

The next climacteric in the struggle against imperialism followed as a consequence of the Second World War. A whole host of countries in Asia and Africa which were formerly dependent achieved independent status. Among these can be mentioned, India, China, Indonesia, Morocco, Tunisia, North Korea, North Vietnam. In Eastern Europe states emerged which were committed to an uncompromising struggle against imperialism and colonialism.

There is thus found in the world today a majority of mankind that has no interest in the preservation of the infamous colonial system.

Africa still remains however, largely under the control of foreign imperialist states. The continent has not been completely cleared of domination and exploitation by states in Western Europe and America. This constitutes the major problem for the peoples of Africa . . . freedom from foreign control.

And indeed the peoples of Africa are only too keenly aware of this. The continent is awake. Everywhere a struggle is being waged against imperialism for freedom, democracy, equality and national independence. Where a few years ago there were only two nominally independent states in Africa there are now eight independent states. Others are on the verge of independence such as Nigeria, Algeria, Uganda, New Guinea and Somaliland. Powerful national liberation movements are challenging the status quo ever more powerfully and successfully.

Mention must be made of the special situation that exists in South Africa. Here we have an independent state in which a minority oppresses the majority of the population. Here we have a state that has instituted a system of racial rule or Apartheid that reduces the vast majority of the people to the position of third class citizens. Here the African National Congress and its allies in the Congress Movement are building up on sure foundations a multi-racial people's power that will inevitably usher in equality and democracy in our land in our lifetime. The African National Congress has played an important role in the calling of the Pan-African Congress and will put forward the views of the entire peoples of South Africa strongly and powerfully before the Congress itself.

It is clear from the developments described above that the call for a Pan-African Congress is a timely and correct one.

Of course the imperialists and their flunkies cannot view any of these events with equanimity. There is a great deal of opposition to the freedom and independence of Africa and its peoples. This opposition is offered by the imperialist powers which include, Britain, France, the United States, Belgium, etc.

It may be convenient here to deal with the myth that is so assiduously fostered by United States propagandists that it is not a colonial, imperialist power.

The whole history of the United States belies this claim. The century-old interference in the affairs of Mexico and the South American states; the history of Puerto Rico and the Phillipines; the enforced opening up of Japan in 1853 by Commander Perry of the U.S. Navy; the century of American imperialism in China which persists to this day; all these are sufficient indication of the character of the United States.

Even more fundamental from the African point of view is the internal *treatment of peoples of African origin in the United States of America* which is ruthlessly discriminatory to this day.

It is no accident that the United States frequently sides with the Colonial powers at the United Nations against the oppressed peoples. The excuses based on strategic interests and treaties are not valid at all. Nor is it surprising that the United States is incapable of issuing a clear categorical *statement that it favours the establishment of independent states NOW* and an end to racial discrimination and inequality. All we get is vague indications of goodwill, sympathy and a faith in a gradualistic, evolutionary path that may someday in the dim future lead to freedom.

In order to conceal these realities attempts are now afoot to divert the attention of the peoples of Africa towards the pet bogey of the Western Powers — Communism. This sometimes takes the form of urging that Africa become a third force between Communism and the West. At other times the question is posed as if the issue before the African people were one of choosing between Pan-Africanism and Communism. Just as similar attempts were made to sabotage the Bandung Conference so efforts are now being made to dissipate the work of the Pan-African Congress by introducing speculative problems that do not face the African people today.

The problems that Africa are faced with — the Real as opposed to the Illusory problems — are clear.

The tremendous resources of the continent are in foreign hands. The riches of the Congo are exploited by Belgian interests. The great lakes of Africa — Nyanza, Tanganyika, Nyasa — are regarded as British. The immortal Nile has its source in Uganda, under the control of a foreign power. This can be said with regard to the vast bulk of the continent's resources. A clear statement on the ownership of these resources is called for.

There is the question of the so-called plural societies in which European minorities, who have Africa as their home, exercise inordinate control over the destinies of African majorities. This will call for an investigation into racial discrimination and apartheid in South Africa, the Central African Federation, Algeria and Kenya.

There is the great problem of War and Peace. This affects all mankind at the present time. It is true that some racialists in our country feel that the African people possess neither the equipment nor the right to declare their attitude on international affairs.

But the latest weapons of mass destruction — atom and hydrogen bombs and ballistic missiles — have shattered forever the myth of international affairs as the preserve of professional diplomats and commentators. The

inevitability of total destruction in the event of a new world war has made the question of war and peace vital to every thinking human being.

Western bases of war are placed on our continent. France intends polluting the atmosphere by testing nuclear weapons in the Sahara desert without so much as a 'by your leave' from the peoples most concerned. The voice of the African must be heard on angry protest against this imperialist outrage.

There are some groups on the continent that foresee the possibility after freedom is achieved of establishing a federation of African states or even a unitary Pan-African state. Some people believe in this ideal and others do not regard it as a practical problem at all. This must not be raised at the Pan-African Congress as an issue which can produce unnecessary discussion over what is academic and speculative whilst Africa still remains largely under the iron heel of the conquerors.

Summarising then . . . . the co-ordination of the struggle for freedom; the control of African resources; racial discrimination, apartheid and segregation; peace . . . These are the issues facing the peoples of Africa and they should be the issues on which our united voice should be heard at the Pan-African Congress. Africa Must Be Free! Africa! Mayibuye!

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by

WALTER SISULU

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**I**t seems incredible that the world is brought to the very verge of war time and time again through the calculated acts of policy of the United States of America. And that all the painful tensions that people must endure are brought about deliberately by the leaders of this great nation; while at the same time these leaders mouth pious generalities about peace and freedom at gatherings of the United Nations.

The time has come for people all over the world not only to expose America's grand imperialist design which is so clearly demonstrated in the Middle East and Far East, but also to take decisive action to put a stop to it.

The situation brought about over Taiwan is a serious threat to world peace, and its consequences can have a devastating effect not only in China and in the United States, but to the entire human race. America's irresponsible and provocative acts in collusion with that played-out, doddering and dissolute old traitor, Chiang Kai-shek should be brought to an end. Where the United Nations are unable or unwilling to act, the people of every country must force them. The United Nations Charter places an obligation on all member states to preserve and defend world peace by seeing that all nations have the right of self-determination.

It is easy for representatives of powerful governments to speak of peace. And it can be meaningless. The United States claims to be the champion of peace and disarmament, at the same time as their sixth and seventh fleets wander around arrogantly trying to intimidate the nations of the east. And who is it that is interfering with the internal affairs of China? Unless it is claimed that Taiwan and the other islands such as Quemoy and the Matsus do not belong to China?

During the war in China, the U.S.A. threw in everything in an attempt to defend its vast vested interests in what it considered as practically its colony. America sent troops, thousands of advisers, nine air groups with 1700 'planes, and in money no less than 12,000 million dollars in an attempt