

# 1960—YEAR OF DECISION

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If the task of the historian is to record and reflect events, that of the journalist is to record and anticipate them. And so the journalist often becomes the author of his own dishonour as a prophet. By anticipating events, he seeks to alert public opinion to prevent their happening. And when they do not happen . . . well, that is a normal career risk.

As things are moving in Africa, 1960 looks like becoming a year of momentous importance. There are many reasons for making this prediction.

Firstly, in the early part of that year, a constitutional conference is to decide the future of the Central African Federation; secondly, Nigeria's leaders have announced their intention of demanding their complete independence in April of that year; thirdly, by fiat of the United Nations, Somalia is to achieve its independence; fourthly, the Lyttelton constitution reaches the end of its trial period in Kenya.

There are two other factors of importance. A new British Government will be elected in 1960. It may conceivably mean the return of a Labour administration.

The other factor is that the new South African Government (which is to be elected in the middle of 1958) will have had sufficient time to get down to the implementation of its electoral programme.

Even if we assume that all these scheduled changes will take place without serious difficulties, they are sufficiently important to guarantee a fairly radical transformation in the character of Africa's political development.

There is, however, no justification for sanguine hopes. It is, at least, worth considering the possibility that the inter-action of these events will precipitate a chain of events comparable with the cataclysmic overturn of the *status quo* in Asia that began in 1946 and reached its full force in the succeeding two or three years.

A useful starting-point for a review of what 1960 may produce is the Central African Federation. In 1952 the British Government decided to impose a federal constitution on the Rhodesias and Nyasaland at the request of the White settlers, and in

defiance of the overwhelming opposition of the African leaders.

The Federation was to run for a trial period of up to ten years, with the prospect of a review in 1960 at the earliest. The supporters of Federation were not unaware of the deep suspicions of the Africans; suspicions that had their roots in the fear that a predominantly settlers' Government would seek to entrench White privilege and obstruct the natural development towards majority, i.e. African, rule. Encouraged by Lord Malvern and Sir Roy Welensky, they hoped that once the economic and social benefits of partnership had become manifest, African suspicions would evaporate. Thereafter, it would be relatively simple to reach agreement on a new constitution granting independence to the Federation.

The opponents of Federation based themselves on four main arguments. They reasoned that once Westminster had devolved a great measure of its power on a settlers' government, it would be impossible to retrieve the initiative should the experiment not succeed. They feared that the method of imposing Federation would strengthen rather than weaken African suspicions. They claimed that this would result in the growth of a militant African nationalist movement which would be difficult to guide and control in the event of a crisis. And they argued that however many social or economic benefits might accrue from Federation, it was morally wrong to flout majority opinion; a moral wrong that would weaken British influence.

After five years of Federation the position of the supporters and the antagonists has not changed markedly. Each side continues to hold fast to its original attitude. Such fluctuations as have occurred, have strengthened the antagonists rather than the supporters. I say this for two reasons. A number of leading Federation supporters in the United Kingdom are now saying, at least privately, that their earlier hopes have been proved wrong. African nationalism, they say, has become sharper in Central Africa. And this conclusion can hardly be contested. The second reason follows from the first conclusion: whereas the African nationalist movement was in its embryo when Federation was being discussed, it is now a sturdy stripling; immature, uncertain of its direction and of its strength, but capable of real anger, and becoming increasingly articulate.

It is not part of the purpose of this article to examine the extent to which the policy of partnership is being given reality in Central Africa. It is an interesting argument, but irrelevant

to this analysis. What is important is that the African leaders do not feel themselves reassured by what is happening in those territories. Such concessions as have been made to them (and there have been many) have failed to allay suspicions. On the other hand, these concessions have increased the fears of certain Europeans and strengthened the reactionary elements, so that their pressure on the Welensky Government in the Federation and on the Garfield Todd Government in Southern Rhodesia is increasing.

The pattern of disagreement appears to be well established. We can safely assume that this tripartite approach to the problems of the Federation will confront us in 1960. What, then, are the prospects for a peaceful solution?

Sir Roy Welensky has already announced his intention of demanding complete independence for the Federation. The African nationalist leaders have responded by demanding that the Federal system should be dismantled as a failure.

In the United Kingdom reactions are likely to be similarly divided, not only between the two major parties, but within the parties as well.

On the whole, the Conservative Party favours granting independence to the Federation, while the Socialists are opposed to it. The Conservatives would argue that Federation is working reasonably well; that it is absurd to continue granting independence to less developed colonial territories while holding the Federation back; and that, anyway, it is impractical to try and delay independence. Their only condition would be the proper safeguarding (more entrenched clauses) of African interests in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

The Labour Party is opposed to independence for the Federation. But it is also opposed to the African demand to dismantle the Federation. Its belief is that African political rights in the Federation, and particularly in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia, should be greatly strengthened.

It is still too early to know whether Sir Roy Welensky will be dealing with a right-wing or a left-wing British Government. Assuming it will be a Conservative administration, we are likely to find Sir Roy granted his wishes, subject to safeguards. What will the Africans' reactions be? Beyond saying that they are preparing for all eventualities, Congress leaders are naturally not committing themselves to any particular line of action. Militant political opposition is the minimum that might be

expected. Violence cannot, however, be ruled out. How far will the Africans go, if pushed?

Those who know Nyasaland are particularly concerned about developments there. Nyasa nationalism is militant, and becoming increasingly so. The moderate leaders are already being gradually squeezed out. It would be shortsighted to rule out the possibility of force being used by both sides. Will Britain be prepared to lend support should this become necessary, or will the Federation be able to look after itself? No doubt, South Africa would be willing to play the good neighbour if the settlers are hard-pressed.

Consider the other possibility: that Sir Roy will have to face a Labour administration in 1960. What will he do if his demands are refused? There are many among his supporters who say, "another Boston tea-party!" It is difficult, but necessary, to envisage the possibility of the settlers' asserting their power in defiance of Westminster. What would Britain do if this came to pass? Is it likely that British troops would be put into the Federation?

Consider another possibility: that the settlers usurp power and defy Westminster, whereupon the Africans defy the settlers. Britain could not conceivably put in troops against the Africans, who would be acting in support of Westminster. Under such circumstances would South Africa not be the natural source for additional troops if the Federal Government were too hard-pressed?

These are grim forebodings. There are those who say one should not talk about them—in print. But they are being talked about just the same. It is important, therefore, that we should at least know what the possibilities are in the event of failure to reach understanding and agreement. Central Africa can easily become a flashpoint of trouble—either from the Black side or from the White side, depending on what decisions are taken. On the other hand, there is still time for compromise, provided both sides are made to realize the dangers of the situation.

From Central Africa to Kenya. There, too, the constitution that favours the settlers comes to an end; always assuming, of course, that the Lyttelton constitution (already under heavy pressure) lasts that long. The Kenya settlers have less power than the Rhodesian. The Colonial Government is still capable of exercising the initiative. Also, the Indian factor is an

important one; it may be expected to weaken rather than strengthen the settlers' case, although the Indian leaders did share the pickings of office with the settlers under the Lyttelton agreement.

The Kenya settlers have been remarkably liberalized under the impact of the Mau Mau rebellion. But there is a limit to their liberalism. To put it in another way. The limits of White liberalism in Kenya fall short of the minimum limits of African concessions. It remains, therefore, the task of the Kenya Government (and ultimately of Westminster) to use its authority to stretch the limits of either one side or the other, or to stretch each somewhat.

The Africans' demand is twofold: long-term recognition of democratic rights in Kenya, which means admitting that the Colony will eventually be ruled by an African majority; and a short-term policy of substantially increasing African representation in the Legislative Council to reduce the preponderance of the settler and Asian majority. One has the feeling that there is room for compromise in Kenya, provided there is effective and early action. Delay, even until 1960, may be too late. Certainly, if there is trouble in Central Africa, it will be too late—so far as the settlers are concerned, anyway.

And what happens in Kenya will assuredly affect developments in its two neighbouring territories, Tanganyika and Uganda.

North of Kenya stretches the Horn of Africa. If not in shape, at least in potential, it is a powder-horn. Somalia (formerly under Italian control) has been guaranteed its independence within three years. The country, though retarded by economic and other factors, has made remarkable advances in the past few years. The Italians deserve some of the credit for this improvement. And the independence of Somalia is likely to kindle Somali nationalism. Apart for Somalia, there are Somalis in the British Protectorate of Somaliland, in Northern Kenya, and in Ethiopia.

Britain has indicated its willingness to allow the Somalis in its Protectorate to join Somalia when they are ready to take this step. But what of the Ethiopian Somalis? And what of the Reserved and the Haud areas of British Somaliland that were recently transferred to Ethiopia? The Somali tribesmen are up in arms; and this is not just a figure of speech. The Horn of Africa is a camp of armed men; men who are still accustomed to settling their differences by the old methods. Security has

never been properly established. The emergence of Somalia to independent statehood will not necessarily increase security there.

The Ethiopians are easily provoked, and the Somalis can be most provocative. It will need good sense and good leadership to maintain even the relative tranquillity that the Horn has known since the war. The problem is not yet serious. Its danger lies in the fact that it could so easily get out of control once anything went wrong. The Somalis are determined to regain their "lost lands"; the Ethiopians are not willing to surrender them. Nor do they view with any particular love their rising, independent neighbour, Somalia. Ethiopia has always regarded the whole of the Somali territory as part of the Kingdom of the Lion of Judah.

The United States places its faith in Ethiopia as the most stable country in North-East Africa. Britain, somewhat conscience-stricken over the Haud and Reserve areas, has not committed itself in the same way. If, however, the new Islamic State of Somalia should ally itself to Nasser's Egypt, the situation might change. Many of the Somali leaders have been educated in Cairo. But so, too, were many of the Sudan leaders. The result has not always been favourable to the Egyptians. This aspect may not be important, but it is just as well to keep it in mind. In a fluid situation it is impossible to say which factors are most likely to come to the top.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the continent, the Nigerian leaders will be meeting in Lagos early in April, 1960, to insist on their country's independence. Provided the leaders of the major regions are united in this demand, it is difficult to see on what grounds Britain could possibly refuse to concede freedom to Nigeria—a country with a population four times that of Ghana, and with economic resources many times greater. A united, independent Nigeria will be a formidable force in Africa. Its impact will be vastly greater than Ghana's. Potentially, it is the most powerful country on the continent. But it is also one of the most fissiparous. And if the present experiment in regional self-government should by any chance come unstuck, or if there are unexpected divisions between the leaders of the different regions, Nigeria's situation could deteriorate rapidly. We have seen how Indo-China split into four after the withdrawal of the French power, and we are still witnessing the failure of the Indonesian Government to

maintain the effective unity of the former Dutch East Indies. The Nigerian story is likely to end differently because Britain, unlike the French and the Dutch, is willingly surrendering power, and carefully preparing the ground for a transitional form of government leading to independence. 1960 will show the success or failure of the Nigerian experiment.

The situation in South Africa will, by then, have moved further along the road to disintegration, whether or not the Nationalist Government is returned to power in 1958. Working on the assumption of a Nationalist victory, my one prediction in this field is that the disintegration that is already so marked a feature in the social structure of the Union will have spread to the Nationalist Party itself. The first signs of disintegration within the Nationalist ranks are already evident. Some time, fairly soon, the Nationalists will have to face the realities of their apartheid policy: either they must confess that their nibbling at the problems is not achieving the results they expected, or they will have to make a more radical approach to the whole question of separation. The two wings of the Nationalist movement—the total *apartheiders* and Strijdom's "compromise" *apartheiders*—must inevitably face a showdown. If the Nationalists are returned at the next election with a substantial majority, such a showdown may come fairly soon. Events in other parts of Africa (and, indeed, in the rest of the world) will contribute towards forcing the issue. In 1960 (if not sooner) the rift may become sharp. I am not saying that this will destroy Afrikaner nationalism. On the contrary, my own belief is that it may bring about a new orientation between the European political parties and give new shape and direction to the country's segregation policies.

Thinking ahead to 1960, one is tempted to speculate about Ghana which will be on the eve of its first general elections, or about the situation in Algeria; about the developments in Madagascar that would seriously concern me if I were a French administrator, or about the emerging nationalism in the Belgian Congo. But it is enough just to touch on these problems to remind ourselves of what was said at the beginning of this article: that events in any one part of the continent might act as a catalytic agent sparking off a chain reaction throughout the whole.