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UNEASY 'UNITY' IN S.A. TRADE UNIONS

Uneasiness is surging beneath the surface of South African trade unionism, particularly in those older unions who see their true worth and service in the basic beliefs of trade unionism, not in the specific implementation of any branch of a narrow party political ideology.

Thus while there is surface unity through the super-federation known as the South African Confederation of Labour – achieved initially under compulsion of the Industrial Conciliation Act, which barred non-Whites from effective trade union participation – the divisions remain, based firmly upon the older unions' faith in what they see as the true function of a trade union.

The Confederation of Labour was formed in September last year by four federations of trade unions registered under the Industrial Conciliation Act. The federations concerned were the S.A. Trade Union Council (150,000 members), the S.A. Federation of Trade Unions (58,000 members), the Co-ordinating Council of S.A. Trade Unions (25,000 members) and the Federal Consultative Council of S.A. Railways and Harbours Organisations (80,000 members).

The formation of this body came after considerable behind-the-scenes activity and careful canvassing of leading individuals in each of the federations. After several secret meetings, a formal gathering of representatives of the four bodies was held in Pretoria on September 7, 1957.

Outwardly, this getting together suggests a growing unity in the trade union movement, but the unity is more apparent than real. The Confederation does not weld the four rivals together, nor have they been drawn closer in a common desire to stand together in the defence of trade union rights. Fundamental differences on vital issues remain.

At least one of the four federations is making heavy weather over the decision to join the Confederation. Some of its members fear that their organisation has put its head into a noose.

In its first public declaration, the Confederation stated that "... It does not intend to meddle in racial matters ... or job reservation." Yet these are the very issues which torment most South African trade unions to-day. The older unions are having a bad time because of the disruptive apartheid provisions in the Industrial Conciliation Act.

Racial issue

For more than five years these unions have been seeking unity and workers' solidarity to oppose Government interference in trade union affairs. Their efforts have failed because, as in most other spheres in South Africa, the racial issue makes unity impossible. In addition, there is a strong difference of opinion between many of the unions as to the functions of workers' organisations.

Some members of unions affiliated to the Trade Union Council have been unhappy about the Confederation from the outset. They cannot forget that the other three federations all supported the I. C. Bill, despite its harmful effect upon the trade union movement. They fear that by going into the Confederation, they are being led to surrender, and compelled to swallow the repugnant policies they have strenuously opposed in the past.

They are reluctant to believe that the Confederation will confine itself to non-contentious issues saying that if it did it would have no cause for existence. They suspect, therefore, a sinister aim behind the eagerness to form the Confederation.

Their suspicions are grounded on recent trade union history, particularly upon previous efforts to establish unity.

At the beginning of 1954, when the terms of the Government's proposed amendments to the 1937 Industrial Conciliation Act were made known, the trade unions became alarmed and promptly called a conference to organise united opposition to the Bill. This conference, held in Cape Town in May 1954 and attended by 73 unions representing 230,000 workers, resolved to form a single federation embracing all unions, as a first step in the fight they intended to put up against the proposed measure.

Only a small group, mainly pro-Nationalist, dissented. This group unsuccessfully tried to steer the Conference into a neutral course on the Bill and proposed, as an alternative to a single co-ordinating body, the formation of a Council of Trade Union Federations, i.e. unity of the federations from the top, rather than unity of the unions from below. They did not disclose the purpose of this super-federation.

The Cape Town Conference decided to call a follow-up conference later in the year, to adopt a constitution for the new federation and to elect its office bearers. The formal resolution on unity was submitted to this follow-up conference, held in Durban on October 4 and 5, 1954, and attended by 61 unions with a total membership of 223,000.

Speaking on behalf of unions affiliated to the S.A. Federation of Trade Unions, Mr. George McCormick, proposed some amendments to the resolution, the most important of which was the irrevocable exclusion of Africans from the "new unity".

Mr. McCormick's amendment included a rider, "Whether or not we succeed in establishing this new body, we believe that it would be in the best interests of the movement for the S.A. Council of Trade Union Federations to be established."

The Conference accepted the amendments and the rider and the amended resolution was carried, 39 unions (184,714 members) voting for it, 19 unions (31,777 members) voting against and 3 unions (6,950 members) abstaining. By the simple expedient of abandoning African workers, a majority vote for "unity" had been procured. On this note the Conference ended.

In the months that followed the unions discovered that even the jettisoning of African workers did not attract the unity they sought. Not even Mr. McCormick, who scored the greatest success at Durban, came to bring his own union into the new federation. In fact, his own group, the S.A. Federation of Trade Unions, remained in existence, with Mr. McCormick as its President.*

To make way for the new federation agreed to at Durban, the S.A. Trades and Labour Council took a resolution on October 6, 1954, to dissolve from October 31. Later, the Western Province Federation of Labour Unions took a similar decision.

The African unions, and those having African members, which had belonged to the S.A. Trades and Labour Council, were now homeless. They had been excluded from the "new unity" and their old federation had gone out of existence. These unions therefore decided to form their own federation and established the S.A. Congress of Trade Unions as an all-races co-ordinating body.

The "new unity" federation, the S.A. Trade Union Council, ended up as little more than a minor reshuffle of old alliances. Unity was as far off as ever. There were five federations before the 1954 conferences and there are five federations to-day.

Hardly a murmur

Moreover, the issue which sparked the first Conference in Cape Town has been lost in the delusive pursuit of "Unity," which has now become the Lorelei of the South African trade unions. In their desperate concentration upon "Unity," the unions have forgotten what they wanted the unity for.

The I.C. Bill went through Parliament with hardly a murmur from the unions. There was no rallies, no public protest meetings, no demonstrations, no counter action of any kind. The small Congress of Trade Unions staged a minor placard demonstration outside Parliament (for which those concerned were later prosecuted). The new Trade Union Council contented itself with giving evidence before the Select Committee and issuing a few press statements.

Now Lorelei Unity is enticing the unions once again, this time through the establishment of the S.A. Confederation of Labour, which some fear will break the Trade Union Council, just as the old T. and L. C. was broken.

The Congress of Trade Unions — the non-racial body — has not been invited to join the new Confederation and would certainly not be welcome if it applied for membership.

*Footnote—Mr. McCormick is no longer with the Federation, having been appointed, on November 1, 1956, to the Industrial Tribunal, the body established under the I.C. Act to deal with job reservation. The appointment is for five years at a salary of £3,280 a year, plus £234 cost-of-living allowance, plus transport and subsistence allowances, sick leave facilities and 36 days' leave annually.

The danger for the T. U. C. lies in the fact that the other three partners in the new alliance are strongly pro-apartheid and supporters of the restrictive I. C. Act. Many of the officials and members of the unions attached to these federations are active members or supporters of the Nationalist Party.

When the T. U. C. Executive decided last year to join the Confederation, it did so subject to ratification by its annual conference. In March 1958, Conference argued this matter in secret session for more than ten hours. Finally, compromise was reached and the T. U. C. continues as a member of the Confederation, hoping to protect itself against embarrassing commitments by way of a "veto" clause in the new body's constitution.

However, uneasiness prevails amongst members of unions affiliated to the T. U. C. especially those who are suffering the disruptive effects of the apartheid clause in the I. C. Act.

The brooding uneasiness which prevails in the older unions is intensified because of the leading role played by Daan Ellis of the Mineworkers' Union. Ellis was the prime mover in the establishment of the Confederation, and acted as interim Chairman until its formal constitution. Ellis has never been friendly towards such unions as the Building Workers, and the Garment Workers and has always taken a firm stand on the side of the Nationalist Government.

The journal of his Union, "The Mineworker," openly sided with the Government against the Garment Workers' Union when the latter protested against job reservation in the clothing industry.

A further development which is arousing anxiety is the persistence of the pro-Government section in the Confederation in urging that it should be registered under the I. C. Act. In this they have now succeeded. In the view of many, registration is unnecessary and merely places undesirable obligations upon the unions. They suspect an ulterior motive in this move.

The three federations which accepted the I. C. Act, and favour trade union apartheid, are therefore cock-a-hoop. They are confident that from here on they will call the tune. If they do, South African trade unions will soon lose the traditional character of true trade unionism. Such a change will be the fulfilment of Nationalist plans.

In Parliament to-day are at least seven men who can sit back and smile at the turn of events. They are the men who led the Broederbond-inspired movements which tackled the trade unions many years ago. Their unavailing efforts of a decade and more ago are now being rewarded.

These seven men are Senator Jan de Klerk, Minister of Labour, Mr. B. J. Schoeman, Minister of Transport, Dr. Albert Hertzog, Mr. J. du Pisanie, Mr. J. C. B. Schoeman, Mr. H. L. van Niekerk and Mr. J. W. van Staden, the four last-named being "new boys" to Parliament. #

A.N.C. SPLIT SEEMS CERTAIN

The Africanists are again trying to seize power in the African Nationalist Congress in South Africa, despite the setback to their earlier efforts (see Africa X-Ray, March and April, 1958) caused by the settlement of the Transvaal disputes. And again the Africanists are being supported by rank-and-file members who find the Africanist lead an outlet for their own dissatisfaction with what they consider to be Congress shortcomings. A split in Congress seems likely sooner or later.

Observers in Johannesburg are convinced that the present uneasy situation cannot continue – certainly not beyond the end of the treason trial next year.

There were signs of a coming split late in 1956, especially in the Eastern Cape province, one of the Congress strongholds. Difference of opinion had arisen over both theories and programmes of action. Some of the older and more-experienced men were not in favour of the aggressive policies urged by the younger generation.

Then came the widespread arrests on suspicion of treason. This dramatic development at once cemented the cracks in the structure of Congress. Among those arrested were some from each of the rival schools of thought emerging within the movement. But once they were all put in the same dock for the same alleged conspiracy, previous differences of opinion about correct tactics were sunk in the interests of the common cause: the defence of all involved.

For many months last year the leading spirits of the A.N.C. were immobilised in the Drill Hall, Johannesburg. Meanwhile, some measure of leadership had necessarily devolve on new figures. One result was visible at the A.N.C. conference last December (from which all the treason suspects were debarred by the terms of their bail). It is clear that sharp criticism was expressed not only in the matter of proper elections and administration, but also in regard to the question of close co-operation with the Indian Congress.

Outside influences

The so-called Africanist group (see *Africa X-Ray*, March, April, 1958) voiced the dissatisfaction felt about the course taken in recent years under the influence of Indians and even of Europeans who see in the A.N.C. an instrument potentially much stronger than any other at hand. Some Africans believe that, left to its own devices, the A.N.C. would not have got into the legal and other difficulties that now confront it.

The failure of the stay-away-from-work move in April (see *Africa X-Ray*, April 1958, supplement) was partly caused by internal dissension and lack of unity. This was most marked in Natal where the Indian Congress declined to endorse the demand (allegedly inspired by the A.N.C.) for a general wage of £1 a day. Indian workmen in Natal are in fact afraid of losing their jobs to Africans if they give employers an excuse to get rid of them.

The recent call from some members of Sabra, sparked by Professor L. J. du Plessis, for a meeting with the valid leaders of the non-Whites has given rise to further friction. Some, including Chief Albert Luthuli, appear ready to go to a conference with men from Sabra. Others are firmly against the idea, conscious of the temptations of "toenadering" with Nationalists of any type, and sceptical of any benefits to come from such contacts.

Luthuli's business association with companies of which the Nationalist Minister of Finance is a director (see *Africa X-Ray*, April 1958) has been made a convenient peg upon which to hang added criticism of his leadership.

Whatever the outcome of the treason trial, the proceedings and the disclosures expected from both Crown and defence witnesses will have a profound effect on the future of the A.N.C. Moreover, the Government may yet respond to the cry, already heard from some Nationalists in Parliament, and supported by many United Party leaders, to ban the A.N.C. When the ban finally comes, it may solve all Congress problems – and leave the way wide open for several new organisations free from links with the past. #

NASSERISM TRIES TO BUY A PATH TO THE SOUTH

Another African State will soon emerge – Somalia. Its impending new status poses a momentous question: Which sphere of influence will it enter on attaining political independence?

Somalia, barren and bereft, is a ripe plum to drop into the United Arab Republican basket, and could provide a bridgehead for Communism in Africa, already trying to penetrate down the Nile Valley.

Somalia was familiar to many South Africans in World War II as Italian Somaliland. It collapsed along with their Ethiopian Empire when the Italians were forced to surrender their corner of Africa. Since then Somalia was under military occupation; then under United Nations trusteeship. In 1960, Somalia is due to become a wholly independent state – the first of the UN's wards to come of age.

It occupies a strategic position on the East African Coast in that historical part of the continent known as the "Horn of Africa". Successive migrations of African peoples have passed this way to the south, and from this area in recent centuries have spread the Somali people.

Today the Somalis live not only in Somalia itself, but in the adjoining territories of British Somaliland, French Somaliland, the Ogaden or "Haud" of Ethiopia, and in the Northern Province of Kenya.

For a number of years there has been a vigorous campaign through the Somali Youth League to unite all the Somali nation into a "Greater Somalia" which would embrace all the lands in which the tribes now dwell.

With the approach of independence, and the resulting upsurge in the morale and prestige of the Somali people, the Greater Somalia move is receiving added impetus. This is coming specially from the United Arab Republic of Colonel Nasser, who would welcome such an important slice of territory adhering to the Arab bloc.

Few countries in recent times can lay claim to having had so many "suitors". Egypt is but one of many countries which are hoping that Somalia may fall within their respective spheres of influence once independence is a reality.

But what has Somalia – a desperately poor country of rock and sand – to offer any of the larger powers? Apart from bananas, most of which are shipped to Italy, and that age-old export, incense, Somalia produces little of any value. There is no doubt that when she embarks upon her new career as a free nation, Somalia will have a heavy debt weighing her down.

For two decades

Mr. Hagi Farah, Minister for Economic Affairs, estimates that the embryo nation will need about £1,785,000 of aid after achieving independence, in order to meet the budget deficit. The International Bank has estimated that Somalia will require outside aid for two decades.

With this financial spectre ahead, Somalia is naturally willing to interest itself in proposals put forward by emissaries with adequate funds behind them. Britain and the United States have both been making overtures in recent years. Italy is reported to be anxious to maintain its trade links with its one-time colony. So far, Russia has not been too prominent, but there is no doubt that it, too, has hopes of being in line for Somali support.

The main "bait" which Somalia offers is its position. A glance at the map of Africa is sufficient to show the strategic significance of the country lying just south of the vital Bab-el-Mandeb Straits, which Aden dominates from the East.

In any conflict between the West and Russia, this Horn of Africa would undoubtedly be in the front line, with the present inflammatory situation throughout the Middle East. To the West a sympathetic Somalia is vital, but the signs are that sympathies lie in the other direction.

Successive "waves" of cultural missions from Cairo, generous scholarships to Egyptian universities, and the constant outpourings from Cairo Radio, have not failed to achieve the desired effect. Egypt's big appeal is Islam and, as in the Yemen and the Aden Protectorate, it is a popular "line" with the Somalis.

Plans are going ahead for independence: already the Somalia "shadow Government" is in being, understudying the role it will soon be called upon to play. It is widely believed that the Italian administration in Somalia would be glad to quit earlier than 1960.

If this can be achieved smoothly, the hand-over may take place sometime next year, instead of waiting until the appointed day - April 1, 1960.

But finance still scribes the big question mark. #

TANGANYIKA - NEW STRESSES

Tanganyika, a United Nations trusteeship territory, goes to the polls for the first time in September. But as election fever spreads among people of all races, and political temperatures rise, particularly among Africans, the powerful Tanganyika African National Union (Tanu) finds things not going all its own way.

The political strongman of Tanganyika is 37-year-old Julius Nyerere. (See Africa X-Ray, June 1955). He is backed by the powerful Tanu political machine, with a membership of many thousands spread throughout Tanganyika's large territory and embracing many tribes.

Nyerere himself is contesting an Eastern Province seat. This campaign was temporarily interrupted by the need to face a charge of libel brought against him, and the Tanu newspaper "Sauti ya Tanu," by two District Commissioners. Fresh from his defence of Tom Mboya in Kenya, came Leftist Queen's Counsel D. N. Pritt, who is finding much to keep him busy in African colonies. (Pritt defended Jomo Kenyatta in the famous Kapenguria case.)

There have been many defections in the Tanu camp; and the organisation itself has suddenly reversed its previous policy to boycott the elections. It has now entered the fray.

Tanu's chief objection to the election proposals was against the restricted franchise. It strongly suspected the voting arrangements, which are on a common roll basis.*

It remains to be seen whether the rather clumsy voting arrangement will be workable. Under the Government's proposals, Africans, Asians, Europeans (and of course, Arabs) will all be on one voters' roll. But each will vote for three candidates - an Asian, an African and a European. Many voters complain that they know nothing about the candidates belonging to the other races. The Government stands firm - each voter must vote for three candidates.

* To qualify, a voter must be 21 and have lived for three of the preceding five years in Tanganyika. In addition, he must have one of these qualifications: (1) eight years of education; or (2) service as a chief, clan leader, local advisor, headman or Council member; or (3) an income of £120 a year. The qualifications favour even recent settlers, while excluding most of the Africans, who are largely peasants with little education - and little income.

Polling begins on September 8 for five constituencies spread over more than 200,000 square miles. More than 28,000 voters have been registered. The elections will be completed next year, when four more constituencies, including Dar-es-Salaam, will be contested.

Nyerere's greatest support is in Dar-es-Salaam; there is doubt about the loyalty of some of the up-country branches, where personalities play a great part.

One of the big issues in the election is the future of the White and Asian minorities in this predominantly African land. In recent months there have been several rash statements by African politicians about the minorities. Nyerere has been counselling moderation. He urges fair play for these minorities. His proviso is, however, that they must be willing to sink their own interests in those of the majority. He strongly opposes any separate representation for the Europeans or the Asians in the Tanganyika Legislative Council.

Another point at issue, even among the Africans, is the target date for self-government in Tanganyika. Nyerere and Tanu say responsible government must come next year. In this they have the backing of many United Nations members who show great interest in the future of this trust territory. Whether Nyerere advocates the full step to self-government or envisages an intermediate stage is not clear, but a more-moderate demand has been voiced by another prominent Tanganyika African, Chief Thomas Marealle, paramount chief of the Chagga people. He told the United Nations, when he addressed the Trusteeship Council in New York, that self-government should be granted within 15 years.

Mr. Zuberi Mtwemvu is another African who is prominent in this first pre-election warm-up. He was expelled from Tanu for criticising its moderate policies towards other races and founded the rival — and strongly Africanist — Tanganyika African National Congress. He hopes to make election capital out of Nyerere's apparent co-operative attitude towards the other races.

Secret talks

Mtwemvu has demanded unequivocally that all non-Africans leave Tanganyika. He has even criticised the presence there of Africans from Kenya and Uganda. On the other hand, Nyerere has threatened to expel from Tanu anyone who advocates the use of force or who mistreats non-Africans in Tanganyika. In this election, at least, this attitude of Nyerere does not directly affect Mtwemvu.

Mtwemvu is reported to be making the most of secret talks which took place between Tanu and the United Tanganyika Party (UTP), the territory's multi-racial group. The recent disclosure that these two groups were considering a merger provided one of the biggest political sensations in East Africa. It brought an early statement from the UTP that the publicity was "premature" and the talks "only exploratory".

The leaders on both sides took the step without first consulting their members. Now there is criticism from both parties.

A merger would make for political stability in Tanganyika and produce a very strong organisation. But there would have to be sacrifices on both sides that would be a severe test to both organisations.

Nyerere and his Tanu will have to withstand severe attacks from former members who have left because they dislike moderation. They include, in addition to Mtwemvu, such strong opponents as Steve Mhando, a former Tanu organising

secretary. Dr. Mwanjisi, one of the African independents opposing a Tanu candidate in the elections, is already claiming the support of one entire Tanu branch. Such is the confusion to which election fever is reducing the Tanu machine.

Most of the limelight has been focussed recently on the African candidates. The candidates of other races appear still uncertain on their policies. In a country thinking the way Tanganyika is today, there is not much point in the minority groups advocating anything but co-operation with the Africans — or at least with those Africans wishing to co-operate. #

KENYATTA "IDOL" FOR NEW SECRET SOCIETY

Jomo Kenyatta, who launched the Mau Mau rebellion on an unsuspecting Kenya in 1952, remained headline news for many months as his trial dragged on. Since he began his seven-year sentence in a remote prison near the Ethiopian frontier, his name has slipped completely from public memory.

But not in Kikuyuland. There the name of Jomo Kenyatta is still magic to his own tribesmen today. The Kenya Government, fondly hoping that time would have blurred the memory of this Kikuyu idol, recently received two rude shocks.

Publication in the London "Observer" of a letter of complaint from a group of Kenyatta's fellow-prisoners at Lokitaung, focussed world opinion on this tiny fortress-prison — and on Jomo Kenyatta.*

Much more ominous was the Government discovery of a new secret society among the Kikuyu, with widespread ramifications and aims closely resembling those of Mau Mau. To achieve self-government and the restoration of land stolen by the Whites, its members believe all they need do is organise and await the return of Jomo Kenyatta to resume the struggle.

The KKM secret society, much less publicised than Mau Mau because it has not yet indulged in violence, is no less sinister. Its full significance has not yet been assessed. (Leading Nationalist African politicians, including Kikuyu M.P.s Julius Kiano, Jonathan Nvaga and Bernard Mate, have denounced any resort to violence.)

The Kikuyu of Kenya are, ironically, one of the most-advanced of all African people and far from primitive — but they have always dabbled in secret societies and surrounded these with all the claptrap of sorcery and black magic. Presumably these societies were rife before the arrival of the White man: certainly they have been rife ever since. Not so long ago it was the Kikuyu Central Association, then the Kenya African Union (far more sophisticated), and then came Mau Mau and now there is KKM.

What is KKM? Its initials have little significance. They stand for Kiama Kia Muingi (Council of the People) and there are variations on the letters, such as Karinki Kimuri Macharia (Seekers of the Lost Light).

Is it a resurrected form of Mau Mau? Not exactly. KKM is rather a secret society trying to avoid the mistakes Mau Mau made, but with the same ultimate objective — getting rid of the White Man from Kenya and setting up self-government

*Footnote. — As we go to press comes a report showing that Kenyatta is not popular with at least one of his fellow-prisoners. The man leapt on his back and assaulted him. Kenyatta was badly bruised but not seriously hurt.

with the Kikuyu in power. Instead of drawing its support from former Mau Mau members now released from detention, the members of KKM are mostly middle-aged men and women and were not particularly suspect during the earlier Mau Mau troubles. It is assumed that these were passive Mau Mau supporters or "fence-sitters" who escaped arrest. Many are unemployed, victims of the economic recession.

KKM operates an intricate cell system, just as Mau Mau did, with all the revolting oaths, too horrible to put in print here.

An interesting clue, perhaps, to their projected methods is the fact that while Mau Mau gangsters bestowed grandiose military titles upon themselves starting at "field-marshal" and working down through "generals", "majors" and "captains" — (the lowest rank), KKM's hierarchy is based on the system used by the Kenya Administration, with such titles as "Provincial" and "District Commissioners", "chiefs" and "headmen". A number of the office-holders are women and large sums of money (by Kikuyu standards) have been collected, with amounts totalling thousands of pounds remitted to "headquarters" somewhere in Nairobi.

That there are as yet few reports of KKM violence is probably due to the fact that when the society was unearthed, during March and April this year, it was still building up its organisation. However, it had already achieved much since it began to smoulder away back in 1955 — first detected in a prison camp, but thereafter little suspected outside.

Poison plot

To date the intelligence forces — infinitely better organised than at the start of the Mau Mau rising — have collected extensive membership lists and traced the ramifications of KKM through the reserves of Fort Hall and Kiambu. They have found subscription lists — but not much of the money. An assortment of poisons has been discovered and all except the "top brass", it is thought, are either already detained, or known.

Through confessions by the rank-and-file, a great amount of information has been secured. The most-ominous information gained was that KKM has been preparing lists of Kikuyu loyalists, due for "execution" as collaborators with the Government.

Most of the executions were to have been by poisoning and for this purpose emissaries have been visiting neighbouring tribes to collect various types of deadly poisons. The most effective prescribed in KKM documents is in the spleen taken from a crocodile or monitor lizard.

The power of the KKM oaths does not seem as binding as with those imposed by Mau Mau, but there have been reports of suicides by voluntary confessors. The oath ceremonies are every bit as bestial and obscene, with the Mau Mau-type paraphernalia of goat's eyes, excreta and human organs.

Just how to deal with this new manifestation of Kikuyu tribal-cum-political expression remains a problem for the Kenya Government, trying now, on another front, to stave off the demands of the sophisticated African politicians for increased political representation leading to the early attainment of an all-Black Parliamentary majority.

Latest demand on the constitutional front presented by the 15 African members is for 50 per cent. of all Ministerial posts, more Legislative Council seats and the abolition of many of the provisions of the Lennox-Boyd Constitution. #

TIDE OF AFRICAN NATIONALISM IS FLOWING FAST

Cautious steps towards an increase in African Elected Members are now under consideration for Nyasaland. The Colonial Secretary and his Colonial Office advisors are known to admit privately that some increase is now unavoidable, but they are carefully testing the ground to see how short these steps towards more African representation may safely be.

Meanwhile they have instructed the Governor and administration of Nyasaland to do their best to mollify the newly returned Nyasa nationalist leader, Hastings K. Banda. (See *Africa X-Ray*, June 1958). Banda held press conferences in London before returning to Nyasaland, and insisted on the unbreakable determination of the Nyasas to get out of the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Federation. In the meanwhile, they would continue to demand universal suffrage, he stressed. But Banda has had VIP treatment from the Nyasaland administration.

The administration is known to be apprehensive of Banda's great influence. Thousands of Nyasas gave him a tumultuous welcome at the airport on his return from long years of self-chosen exile. He himself has estimated the welcoming crowd at 12,000, and this may be about right. He has addressed huge meetings. From the African standpoint he is already the Prime Minister of an independent country.

To act against him now, accordingly, would be to provoke big trouble. So the administration is "playing" him carefully. When he and seven colleagues of the Nyasaland African Congress called on the Acting-Governor (the Governor now being in London for consultations with the Colonial Secretary), they were astonished by a full military salute from the Governor's Guard. This was unprecedented in Nyasaland history. And the Acting Governor himself poured out tea for them.

Banda himself has let it be known to his friends in Britain (of whom he has many) that he is suspicious of all this mollification. He realises that the great majority of Nyasas have set great faith in his being able to produce large, rapid and radical constitutional changes. He realises, equally, that the Government has no intentions of allowing him to do this.

The Government, in his view, will try to discredit him by sheer procrastination — another instance of colonial inability to act with speed when speed is in its own true interests. After touring the country and addressing mass audiences, Banda accordingly intends taking up a medical practice in Blantyre, to give himself a firm and independent base for future operations, which he fears may be protracted.

One thing seems clear. Even though the government, under Conservative influence in London, may procrastinate, it cannot now avoid a notable increase in elected African representation. Nyasaland, more and more, passes into African hands.

The increase of African elected representation in Nyasaland is being paralleled, though much more cautiously and grudgingly, by an increase in Northern Rhodesia. This raises the basic question of what to do about the Federation. Recent elections there have convinced many who previously supported the plan to give the

Federation the status of a self-governing Dominion that this is now impossible. Not even a Conservative Government, it is being said, could do this now; and a Labour Government certainly would not do it. Partnership – even the bare attempt at the beginning of partnership – has failed.

If Dominion status for the Federation is now dismissed as a workable possibility (it would, however, be dangerous for Africans to take this for granted), there seem to remain two large possibilities: (1) to maintain things more or less as they are; (2) to dismantle the Federation.

It can be taken as almost certain that no Government in London will of its own initiative dismantle the Federation. If the extremists in Southern Rhodesia were to win a Federal majority, however, and work for "independence" for the whole of Rhodesia, north and south, while giving Barotseland a special "reserve" status and allowing Nyasaland to go the way of Ghana, a British Government – at any rate a Conservative Government – might find it hard to resist.

If things are maintained more or less as they are, however, a Conservative Government will make gradual concessions to African political demands in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, while a Labour Government would make speedier and more-radical concessions.

Self-confidence

This alternative – of maintaining things more or less as they are – can therefore be seen as at best a stopgap policy, though it might be effective for several years. The Nyasas will in any case continue to demand and work for full independence – Banda did not spend five years on the Gold Coast and in Ghana for nothing. Weak though it is, African leadership in Northern Rhodesia will continue to ask for more representation.

The European minorities will increasingly be faced with more and more vocal and self-confident African majorities. Precedent shows that the European minorities, in this situation, will take the "South African" road: while the Africans, faced with that, will come increasingly under the influence of "Black Nationalism". Having refused partnership, the Europeans will find themselves faced with Africans who no longer want partnership.

These points are being actively discussed in Nyasaland in official and semi-official circles, and cast a gloomy shadow over the future of the Federation no matter what happens. This gloom is deepened by a realisation that recent White actions and attitudes, especially in Northern Rhodesia, are steadily producing among Africans a sense of bitterness, frustration, and incipient revolt.

"Look at Kenya," an important Nyasaland person said privately the other day: "There isn't a single African there who doesn't believe that recent political advances for the Africans are not the direct result of the Mau Mau revolt."

There is an increasing tendency to admit, for all these reasons, that the pace of concession to African demands is not going too fast, but too slowly. Having dragged their feet for so long, Europeans in Africa (at any rate in Central Africa) will have to run now, if they want to keep up with the incoming tide of African nationalism. #

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