

SPOTLIGHT ON AFRICA

RECENT events in Southern Africa have been highlighted in world news. The decolonization of Mozambique and the victory of FRELIMO under the leadership of Samora Machel, the decolonization of Sao Tome and Principe Islands, the bitter and bloody fighting in Angola between the various liberation movements have received wide press coverage.

These isolated snippets can be understood better against the backdrop of Africa's economic relationship to the western world. Before we in Asia absorb these media images we might well pause and look at some aspects of African history.

White Racism

The image of Africa and the African people in the eyes of many Asians remains primarily the picture that was painted by our common colonial masters. The myth of white supremacy, the illusion of manifest destiny and the imagery of the savage, have come to us, not merely through the text books but also multifarious other forms ranging from Tarzan films to tales of the missionaries.

The picture of Africa as a dark continent is impregnated with racist allusions and our European masters succeeded in developing this racialism to the extent of making Asians believe that they were superior to the Africans. Of course in the eyes of the Europeans both Asians and Africans were, as a former local Governor—Barnes—put it niggers. It is not unnatural even today for Asians to believe the implications behind that fantastic story of Stanley stumbling from waterfall to waterfall discovering Africa and finally meeting Dr. Livingstone, we presume. History text books have succeeded in legitimising the absurd implications of that event. It was after all nothing more than an American meeting an Englishman in Africa. Regardless of the pioneering aspects, it only meant the beginning of the collaboration of one more

power the United States of America, in the share of the spoils of Africa by brutalising its heritage. As Kwame Nkrumah pointed out western monopoly interests dominate about 80 percent of African trade. U.S. investments in Africa amounted to 287 million dollars in 1950 and soared to 1,700 million dollars in 1964. Similarly U.S. exports to Africa in the same period jumped from 494 million dollars to 916 million dollars and U.S. imports went up from 362 million dollars to 1,211 million dollars. Such was the nature of the rake off, of Stanley's successors. Livingstone's British successors, in South Africa alone, have an estimated investment of £ 900 million producing a profit of £ 130 million a year for the British coffers.

Slavery and Exploitation

In the white man's voyage of discovery we are told nothing about the magnificent civilizations of West Africa particularly the level of social and cultural life in places like Benin, the traditions of the Yoruba and the Ethiopians, the developments in East Africa especially those around Zimbabwe. All these and more were deliberately left out. Instead we have heard of cannibalism and Christianity. Paradoxically, the cannibals were not the native Africans but the invaders. Ten million Congolese were massacred by the Belgians, in the process of satisfying the hunger of the slave trade and the quest for rubber. The population of Africa was decimated and denuded. It has been estimated that between 1650 to 1850 the population of Africa remained a constant 100 million, whilst that of Europe rose from 103 to 274 million. The stagnation was not the result of birth control but of murder and the trade in human flesh. The story has been well documented by *Eric Williams* in his book "*Capitalism and Slavery*". It describes vividly the so called Triangular Trade between Europe and Africa and the West Indies and the American South.

Millions died merely in the process of transport across the infamous Middle Passage. The trade was carried out by the Belgians, Spaniards, Portuguese, the Dutch and of course the British.

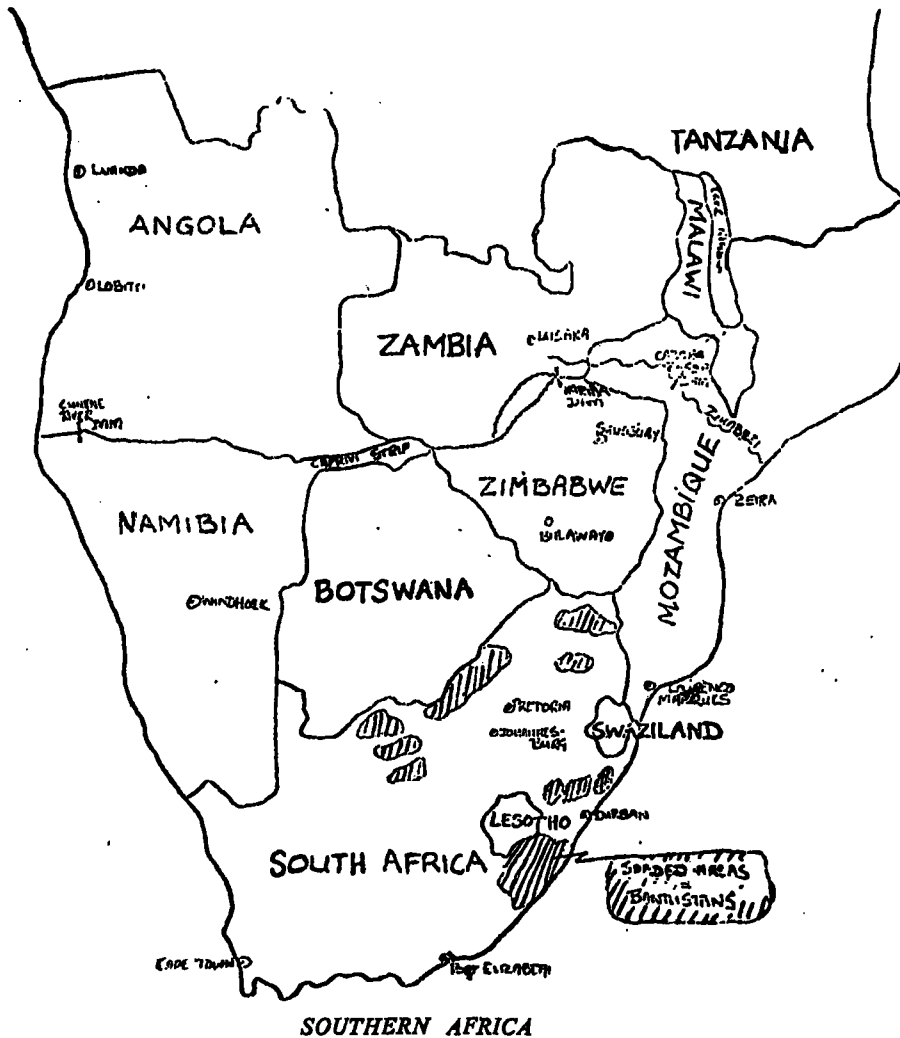
The British in their sickly humour even forced Africans to sing:

Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves.

Britons never, never, never shall be Slaves.

Hawkins who made fantastic amounts of money robbing Africans on the Guinean coasts, (the English guinea originates from this) not only was knighted by Queen Elizabeth I but he also became her business partner to found the Levant Company. The Queen and the knight named their first ship, going in search of African slaves, Jesus. The Levant Company was to become later, the British East India Company.

The slave trade and the raw materials of Africa provided a vast part of the primitive accumulation necessary to give the boost to the development of European capitalism. Many European cities like Bristol, Manchester, Liverpool, Nantes, Bordeaux and Seville were built on the profits of this bloody trade. Some of the great names of European business were founded in the same way. The loot collected by David and Alexander Barclay went to form Barclays Bank. Lloyds Bank had similar origins. Lever Brothers, Union Miniere, Compagnie Francaise D'Afrique Occidentale, Ralli Bros., Elder Dempster, De Beers Consolidated, Standard Bank, Jurgens & Vanderbergh, and Cadburys are just a few of the commercial and industrial complexes that had their origins in the exploitation of Africa. The most famous of these of course was the first mentioned Lever Brothers now better known as Unilever, the Anglo Dutch combine which drew its life blood from the veins of Africa. They were soon to be followed by American companies like United States Steel, Farrell Lines, Morgan Guaranty and in recent times a host of others.



the international news media have conditioned not only Europeans but also Asians to believe that malnutrition is the natural lot of Africans. Charitable organisations like Oxfam publish pictures of black children with huge heads and bloated stomachs, and call upon the European people to save the starving African children. They of course never bothered to tell the story of how the starvation was created in the first place. The gap between Africa and these countries in 1968 was as follows in per capita income terms in US dollars.

USA	...	...	3578
France	...	...	1738
UK	...	...	1560
Africa as a whole	...	...	140
Congo	...	...	52
Ghana	...	...	198
Kenya	...	...	107
Malawi	...	...	52
Morocco	...	...	185
South Africa	...	...	548
Tanzania	...	...	62
Zambia	...	...	225

Recent Developments

When the winds of change blew across Africa in the fifties and sixties power was transferred to African leaders. But these transfers came often as a result of bitter struggle. Kenya and Algeria are clear examples. But when the colonials left, in addition to the companies, they also left big schools which continued the old tradition. The French had a net work of *lycees* and *Ecole Superieurs* and of course the omnipresent *Alliance Francaise*. The British had left behind Gordon College, Kings College, Makerere, Livingstonia College, Fourah Bay College and Achimota. By and large at least in the immediate post independence era the products of these schools and colleges acted in the "acceptable milieu" but things were soon to change. Africa began to produce Ben Bella, Nyrere, Nkrumah, Lumumba and Amilcar Cabral. The old calculations had somehow gone awry and the real struggle for independence was beginning.

It is in this context that one can make some meaning of the recent popular victories in Southern Africa in the Portuguese controlled territories. They came after 450 years of Portuguese colonialism. They have

When the 1870 Congress of Berlin divided up Africa into spheres of influence for the Big Powers it did so to legitimise the existing competitors or to make concessions to the new arrivals like Germany. All the imagery that accompanied the white man's burden, the stories of poverty and primitive life were screens drawn to blind the eyes of the world to the fact that the African continent is, in terms of her mineral resources, one of the wealthiest regions of the world. It is a vast continent and it is often forgotten by us Asians that it is closer to us than Europe. The African continent is larger than the United States, Western Europe, New Zealand and India put together, and it encompassed the great civilisations of not only Benin, Egypt and Zimbabwe but also many others like the Ethiopian and Zulu cultures. It was necessary for the Big Powers to put a blanket over the achievements of the African people and more than that

over its wealth. In the words of the *United Nations Survey of Economic Conditions in Africa* "Africa is well endowed with mineral and primary energy resources. With an estimated 9 per cent of the world's population the region accounts for approximately 28 per cent of the total value of world mineral production and 6 per cent of its crude petroleum output. In recent years, its share of the latter is increasing. Of sixteen important metallic and non-metallic minerals the share of Africa in ten varies from 22 to 95 per cent of the world production".

These ravages have left an indelible scar on the history of the African people. It interrupted African development and "removed Africans from history". Modern thinkers such as Fanon and Cabral referred to this phenomenon when they spoke of colonialism having made Africans into objects of history. Even today

shattered once and for all the illusion of the lush-tropical paradise. At best it will be recreated with new equations. The relationship between Portugal and its African colonies was in effect that between the river and the tributaries. But in this case Portugal was not even the main river. A long time ago, even before Ricardo had invented his theory of comparative cost, based on the exchange of English cloth to Portuguese wine, Portugal had become a British colony in all but name. After the Second World War the control of Metropolitan Portugal was shared by Britain, the United States, Germany and Sweden, in addition to most of the other Western European powers. Portugal was a tottering regime sucking its wealth out of Africa not only for its behalf but also for many other countries. What is more it provided important military bases which were strategically placed for the United States and NATO in the form of the Azores islands and the Cape Verde Islands. For the raw materials and the military bases, the Western powers continued to support Portugal's tenuous hold on Mozambique, Angola, Guine-Bissau, Sao Tome and the Principe islands. When the African Liberation Movements launched their offensive against Portugal they were in fact taking on more than Portugal. Their present victory means much more than the earlier decolonisation victories in Africa. The Algerian war of independence perhaps is a more valid comparison.

MOZAMBIQUE

MOZAMBIQUE is primarily an agricultural country. Its best land was under control of the white Portuguese settlers. The entire plantation sector of mainly tea is Portuguese owned and controlled. The Black population largely existed on subsistence farming, cultivating maize, manioc, rice, peanuts, millet and potatoes on tiny patches of land. During the 10 year liberation struggle, Frelimo had successfully taken control of two of Mozambique's larger provinces and succeeded in developing the war time agriculture despite the continuous bombing raids and chemical warfare used by the Portuguese. It is in the development of this sector that Mozambique's future lies, if it is to achieve a self-reliant growth.

Mozambican industry is directly and indirectly controlled by Portuguese, South African, Italian, and British capital. Coal production of 360,000 million tons is to be exploited by a Japanese Company. Oil prospecting was pursued under US, French, German and South African companies. Deposits of manganese, radioactive minerals, asbestos, iron ore, diamonds and natural gas have been found. But the key to opening this treasure house was the Caborra Bassa Hydro-electric Dam project being built on the Zambezi river near Tete. The project was costed at 300 million dollars and its construction was awarded to a consortium known as Zamco, consisting of Siemens, Telefunken, Brown Boveri, Hotchief, and Voight (Germany), Cogolex and CCGE (France), English Electric (Britain) and CTA and Vecor (South Africa). The dam when built would provide the necessary power for these massive industrial projects. It will be the biggest such project in Africa capable of producing some 17 billion kilowatt hours of electricity a year (Aswan 10 billion kw/h). The principal beneficiary would be South Africa which had plans to buy this electricity through a grid running across the two countries. The resolution of this problem between South Africa and Mozambique's Revolutionary Government is going to cause many problems in the immediate future.

The Mozambican Liberation Movement (Frelimo) suffered many reverses on its road to victory, including the assassination of its leader Dr. Eduardo Mondlane. Though independence has been won, the young government despite its massive difficulties has decided to close the port Beira to Rhodesian goods resulting in a massive loss of foreign exchange. It has done so in solidarity with the struggle of the Rhodesian people against the white minority regime of Smith.

ANGOLA

Angola like Mozambique is primarily an agricultural country. 84 per cent of its people live in the rural areas. Its chief exports are Coffee, Diamonds, Iron ore, Oil, Sugar and Cotton. The Plantation sector is controlled by Portuguese and South Africans. But even more than

Mozambique, Angola has got massive mineral resources. Angolan Diamonds are treasured in European markets and the trade is controlled by Portugal and South Africa. The high grade iron ore in the Cassinga mines is controlled by Krupp of Germany and other US interests. Angola's massive deposits of Oil are controlled by Standard Oil and Gulf Oil of the United States. Recently investments have been made in aluminium, sugar, cellulose, plastics and meat factories. Like the Caborra Bassa Dam a similar project is planned to harness the Cunene river. Again the project is controlled by foreign monopoly interests.

The bitter fighting between MPLA, FNLA and UNITA is fanned and encouraged by foreign interests which plan to continue their economic and political stranglehold over Angola. The fighting therefore, though seemingly between African and African, is in reality between the Angolan people and various foreign interests who have backed their candidates in the hope of future returns. Once again like in the early era it is the African people who suffer. Independence in Angola has not brought an end to the struggle. It seems to have in fact begun.

SOUTH AFRICA

DETAILED press reports of the success of African liberation movements in Southern Africa, and the euphoria of Third World governments have removed the focus from the major threat to the peoples of the region—South Africa. The dramatic developments in Portugal have brought flux to a seemingly static and unchanging situation. But South Africa has meanwhile been engaging in "quiet diplomacy" not merely to ensure its own survival, but to subvert the liberation struggle in the regions by new methods. The two matters are inextricably inter-twined.

South Africa's main strategy to ensure the survival of its white minority system of apartheid has been its plans for the establishment of a *New Commonwealth* under its control, of all the countries of Southern Africa. It envisages this new relationship with the surrounding African countries only on the

Population (1970) and Average Annual Growth Rates (1960-1970)

	Popu- lation (thousands)	Growth rate %
Angola	5,501	2.2
Botswana	575	—
Burundi	3,544	2.0
Malawi	4,440	2.6
Mozambique	7,729	1.9
Namibia and S. Africa	22,160	3.0
Rwanda	3,596	3.0
Tanzania	13,270	2.5
Zambia	4,136	2.5
Zimbabwe	5,310	3.3

Source: World Bank Atlas

basis of no questions being asked about its domestic policy. The *Bantustan* or tribal homelands policy remains the cornerstone of South African domestic policy. It is a scheme of separation of races in the country under the facade of self-government invented to remove from the white areas the most volatile political and social element—South Africa's exploited black indigenous work force. But more than that, the scheme is designed to maintain a flexible labour force which can be utilised to satisfy the needs of the mines and industry. For years now, South Africa has suffered from a shortage of skilled labour, caused by its own policy of racial restrictions. In 1974 South African mines were faced with a shortage of 20,000 men, resulting in a drop in gold production by 12%, at a time when gold prices rose to record heights. The situation was worsened by the ban on the migration of miners to South Africa by Malawi, as a result of the death in an air crash, of 74 returning Malawian miners. Lesotho and Mozambique may soon follow suit. Black South Africans themselves have been reluctant to work in the gruelling and hard conditions of the mines. Therefore South Africa's hope lies in attracting workers from the surrounding African States and this is one of the reasons for the proposal for "better" relations under the guise of the *New Commonwealth* or *Detente*.

THE OUTWARD LOOK

The growing needs of South African capital, drive it towards finding new markets for export goods, raw mate-

rials and investment outlets. Its own market cannot absorb any more in view of the pauperisation of its work force. Rather than redistribute national income to increase the purchasing power of the South African people, it prefers to expand outside. *External expansion is a way of continuing internal repression and sustaining apartheid.* The South African white minority has no other alternative if it is to continue its racist policies.

South Africa spends 10 million dollars a year merely to improve co-operation with Black Africa, and its investments in the rest of Southern Africa total 2 billion dollars (US). This is not surprising since Southern Africa is known to have every known mineral, and South Africa's strength in the area grows daily. She exports more than twice of what she imports from the region. The communications, postal, transport systems, money and banking institutions in *Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana* and *Swaziland* are entirely South African based and controlled. The economies of these four countries are merely extensions of South Africa's. South Africa is also *Malawi's* major trading partner.

Since the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), South Africa has invested nearly 1 billion dollars in Rhodesia and *Rhodesian* exports to South Africa are close to 90% of Rhodesia's total export (most of it for re-export to break the UN sanctions). *Mozambique* earns 50% of its foreign earnings by providing services to South Africa, mainly through migrant mine workers. This is in addition to the Caborra Bassa problems mentioned earlier. *Angolan* diamond and mineral deposits have South African involvement and the Cunene Dam Scheme provides another link. *Zambia* imports more from South Africa than any other country. The South African company, Anglo-American controls *Zambian* copper mines despite nationalisation. The copper provides over 90% of *Zambia's* foreign earnings. The *Detente/*Commonwealth policy therefore takes the pressure off and the stares away from the apartheid system and helps to tighten the economic stranglehold over the region, through labour intakes, exploited

markets, raw materials and investment openings. *The detente and growing economic links will make it more difficult to ostracise South Africa making it more difficult for any international policy of boycott by tying its prosperity to that of the other African countries.*

The triple veto in the UN Security Council against South Africa's expulsion from the UN was the first such 3-pronged veto in the history of the organisation. It only shows the nature of the relationship between South Africa and Britain, France and the USA. Meanwhile South Africa continues to develop its military strike power with the help of the same powers and it now has the capacity to manufacture tanks, heavy artillery, airplanes and atomic weapons.

South Africa, though situated in Africa, is in reality a part of the Western World. This is not merely a question of skin colour but economics and militarism. The Western powers see South Africa as a crucial link in retaining their markets, raw materials, sea lanes and standard of living. It is an integral part of the Anglo-European system.

The recent removals of petty apartheid restrictions like multi-racial cinemas, are intended to present merely an image of growing liberalism—nothing more. The Africans though forming 80% of the population, are still restricted to 13% of the worst land. The black man in South Africa is bound by a 1000 laws restricting his rights on the basis colour, they have no political rights in the land of their birth, they have no recognised trade unions, or the right to strike, and 50% of the children born in *Bantustans* die before the age of 5 from malnutrition. (That in a country where the white population is said to have the *highest* living standards in the world). Thousands are banned, jailed or tortured every year.

The success of the anti-colonial movements against Portuguese oppression does not detract from the fact that the situation in Southern Africa is more grim than it seems at first sight.