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LIBERATION

ONE SHILLING

No. 21, September, 1956.

THE TRANSKEI TRAGEDY

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-by GOVAN MBCKI

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A Journal of Democratic Discussion

No. 21. September, 1956

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Editorial

EGYPT ON THE BRINK

By L. BERNSTEIN

"I thought at the beginning that / would exert all my efforts to safeguarding international peace. I was ready to go to any place and discuss anything. We can give all the necessary guarantees about navigation. But why the outcry about navigation? Why threats military action against the Egyptian people economic pressure against the Egyptian people?"

President Nasser, at a press conference, August 12, 1956

FREEDOM OF THE SEAS

There was a time when freedom of the seas, for British merchant shipping at any rate, was secured by the fact that "Britain ruled the

waves." But that has never, at any time in eighty-seven years of the Suez Canal, applied to freedom of navigation through the canal. Who ever ruled the high seas outside, the Suez Canal has at all times been straddled by Egypt. Ships passing through have done so by the grace

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and permission of successive Egyptian Governments, all of whom have had the power at all times to close the Canal to shipping by a simple act—by placing a single gun in a strategic position on Egyptian soil, or by scuttling a single ship in one of the narrow sections of the 120-mile waterway. That was the position when de Lesseps completed his digging in 1869. That was the position in every year up to the day of nationalisation. And that is the position today. And yet the Canal has remained open to shipping at all times, ever since it was first opened. It is necessary to understand this simple fact in order to understand that nationalisation has no bearing on the freedom of navigation through the Canal. This is, and always has been, the concern not of the Suez Canal Company, but of the Egyptian people and Government.

"If the Egyptian people are not willing to secure the canal, what can an international body do? Can it stand guard 120 miles along the canal? Can anyone believe that the Company was responsible for freedom of navigation? Were M. Picot or the Board of Directors responsible? No. They have no authority to secure navigation, because the canal passes through our territory. We are securing and guaranteeing freedom of navigation in the canal"

—President Nasser, 12/8/56.

There have been many references by both Mr. Eden and Mr.

Mollet to treaty obligations, which, so it is said, President Nasser has breached by nationalising the Canal. But there is only one treaty covering freedom of shipping through the Canal, the Constantinople Convention of 1888, which is so often referred to but never quoted. This treaty, signed by eight nations (not including Egypt, which at that time was a colonial dependency of Britain) declares:

“The Suez Maritime Canal shall always be free and open, in time of war as in time of peace, to every vessel of commerce or of war, without distinction of flag. Consequently, the High Contracting Parties agree not in any way to interfere with the free use of the Canal, in time of war as in time of peace — (Article 1.)

The Canal Company, be it noted, was not a signatory of this convention. But when, in October 1954, an agreement was negotiated between Britain and the Egyptian Government for the evacuation of British troops from the Suez Canal Zone, Egypt undertook the obligations of a signatory of this Convention. It is clear, therefore, that by virtue of geography as well as treaty law; the freedom of Suez shipping is guaranteed by the Egyptian Government and not by the now nationalised Company.

BREACH OF FAITH

But it is claimed by the British and French Governments that the very act of nationalisation of the Company was a breach of treaty.

*7 suggest the word seizure would be more accurate.

No

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nation has the right, unilaterally and in defiance of existing agreements,
to remove its international character . . .

Mr. Eden, House of Commons. 12/9/56.

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“// involves the arbitrary and unilateral seizure by one nation of
an international agency which has the responsibility to maintain and
to operate the Suez Canal. . .

British-French-American Communique. 2/8/56.

The agreement between the Egyptian Government and the Suez
Canal Company by which the Company was granted the right to con-
struct and run the Canal, is clear. So clear that it is never quoted by
British and French Government spokesmen.

“Since the Universal Company of the Maritime Suez Canal is
an Egyptian Company it remains subject to the laws and usages
of the country. As regards the disputes that arise between the Company
and individuals of whatever nationality these must be referred to
Egyptian courts and their procedure be subject to Egyptian law usages
and treaties. As regards disputes that may arise between the Company
and the Egyptian Government these must in like manner be referred
to Egyptian judiciary and settled in accordance with Egyptian law
.”

(Article 16.)

This agreement, signed by canal-builder De Lesseps, is reinforced by the Anglo-Egyptian Evacuation Treaty of 1954, which states:

"The two Contracting Governments recognise that the Suez Maritime Canal, which is an Integral part of Egypt,* is a waterway economically, commercially and strategically of international importance."-- (Article 8.)

What then remains of the claims of "illegal seizure," the claims that Nasser's Government have proved they are not to be trusted? Clearly, these claims like the impassioned claims that "freedom of navigation" is seriously threatened, are too flimsy to be taken as the real reason behind the hysteria which has been aroused in Britain, France and elsewhere by the nationalisation of the canal.

It is sometimes said that the nationalisation of the Canal is an act of seizure not from the British and French Governments, but from the private individuals who are shareholders of the Canal Company. Even some right-wing British Labour leaders who are themselves committed to a policy of nationalisation of various British industries, manage to discover "special circumstances" in the case of the Canal. It is argued —as it was argued at the time Iran nationalised the oilfields at Abadan —that the Suez Canal has the character of an international asset, and therefore stands above the legal rights of any single nation to nationalise it. Those who wonder why Britain, in the midst of Mr. Eden's self-righteousness, refuses to test the legality of President Nasser's action before the International Court at the Hague, should be reminded that on precisely this aspect the International Court ruled in 1951 in favour of Iran's legal right to nationalise the British-owned oilfields. Clearly,

the Canal's nationalisation is legal.

*My emphasis.—L.B.

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PROFIT AND LOSS

While it is understandable that there should be bitterness amongst shareholders, who have lost a lucrative asset they will not easily replace in the modern world, it is understandable that there should be equal if not greater bitterness against the Company amongst the Egyptian people.

"Never has there been a concession so profitable to the grantee and so costly to the grantor as that given by Sa'id to the Suez Canal Company."

Thus Edward Dicey sums up the position in his book "The Story of the Khedivate." Not without reason. Of the 400,000 shares in the original Company formed by de Lesseps, the Egyptian Government had to buy all those which could not be sold elsewhere, which amounted to 176,000—almost one half. The agreement stipulated that Egypt was to provide four-fifths of the workers needed; in practice, sixty-thousand Egyptians monthly (out of a total population of 4 millions!) worked without wages digging the Canal. In the course of the building, 120,000 men died: no compensation was ever paid to their families. By the time

the canal-building was over, experts estimated that Egypt's share of the cost in materials, free transport and workshop facilities, free grants of land and the like was at least half the total cost of £18 million. There is no allowance in this calculation for the human beings burnt out and expended.

The British Government, which had taken no part in the building of the Canal, realised its importance only afterwards. In 1875, Disraeli, backed by all the political pressure he could bring to bear, bought 44% of the shares in the Company from Egypt for almost £4 million. In the ninety years since that purchase, the British Government have received dividends of 3.800"—thirty-eight times the total capital invested. In 1955 alone, after the payment of Egyptian state taxes, the British Government's £4 million investment paid £3 million dividends. Egypt, by comparison, earned £1.1 million in dividends, and another £2.3 million in taxes. For Britain this has been a gilt*edged investment in colonial style: and, in regular colonial pattern, the flag followed closely behind the golden sovereign. In 1882, British gunboats bombarded Alexandria; British troops occupied the land. Egypt's independence was exchanged for British military occupation, designed to safeguard the Canal goose that laid such golden eggs for its British and French shareholders.

Again the people of Egypt paid, in the way colonial peoples do. For three-quarters of a century, foreign speculators impoverished the people and despoiled the land. Her people are amongst the poorest in the world; their death rate is amongst the highest; and the rates for illiteracy and for preventable disease amongst the very worst. If there have been profits from the Suez Canal, these things must be reckoned amongst the losses. And the losses at least are all Egyptian.

PAYMENT IN FULL

It would be understandable if, in the light of all this, Egypt were

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to confiscate the Canal Company's assets. But in this, as in all the turns and passages of the crisis since, the Nasser Government has acted with a statesmanship and dignity which has contrasted sharply with the hysteria and demagoguery of the West.

. . All obligations of the Company are transferred to the State.

Shareholders and holders of constituent shares shall be compensated in accordance to the value of the shares on the Paris Stock Market on the day preceding the enforcement of this law. Payment of compensation shall take place immediately the State receives all the assets and property of the nationalised company."

It is worth noting that payment will be made to shareholders only when all the assets of the Company have been received by the State. It is characteristic of the fashion in which the Anglo-French spokesmen have twisted the situation for their own purposes through the past two months that, on the one hand the Eden Government can 'freeze' all assets of both the Canal Company and the Egyptian Government, while on the other Mr. Eden can sneeringly refer to the promise to pay compensation in full:

"In all circumstances ... it is hardly surprising that Britain and the other nations principally concerned found themselves unable to

accept the assurances which Colonel Nasser had so far been willing to give ."—House of Commons, 12/9/56.

The truth has been twisted to suit policy. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the matter of the Canal Company's staff in Egypt.

"The assets and offices of the Company were seized by armed agents of the Egyptian Government and the Company's employees were compelled to continue at their work under threat of imprisonment."

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Thus Mr. Eden in the House of Commons, 12.9.56. But, in fact, when the Paris rump-headquarters of the Company gave "permission" for pilots to leave their duties with the nationalised Canal authority, it is reported that all who wished to, did so, without interference. Where did the Eden story originate from? Was it manufactured complete from the whole cloth? Article 4 of the Nationalisation Law says that the new Canal Authority

"shall retain all the employees and workers of the nationalised company.

They will continue performing their duties and none can leave his work

or give it up in any manner for any reason except with the permission

of the Authority. ..

There has not yet been a single case reported or even alleged where such permission was applied for and turned down. But the law has not been challenged by Eden; it has been distorted. Distorted, made to sound like something from Hitler's Nuremburg decrees, it serves the purposes of British and French Government policy which can be served neither by Courts of Justice nor by truth.

*My emphasis.—L.B.

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TEST CASE

For Suez has become more than a matter of the Canal itself. It has become a test case for imperialism in Africa and the Middle East. Suez will be contested every inch of the way not just because it is Suez, not just because it pays a handsome dividend, not just because it has strategic value in time of war—but because it symbolises the real global challenge to imperialism, the coming of age of the colonial peoples and the wakening of their determination to seize back for themselves all that has been taken from them over the course of the centuries. If Nasser can nationalise Suez, how long will it be before the people of Iraq and Iran take back their oil, or the people of Northern Rhodesia their copper? The threat to the Canal Company draws together all the strings of imperialism, its purse strings, its skein of military bases from which to dominate the world, its oil on which its military and industrial might is founded, and its racial ideology of white super-men and black “lesser breeds without the law.” Suez is the test case. And imperialism will fight for it recklessly and without regard for truth.

But the path, even for those willing to fight, is not easy. Already, under the first impact of Anglo-French military preparations for action

in Suez, the Baghdad Pact, built for just such an emergency, begins to burst at the seams. Iraq and Jordan pledge support to Egypt and the Arab League. America, troubled no doubt with the disturbing thought that "internationalising" of Suez may set a precedent for the Panama Canal, but equally concerned to keep her fingers free for dabbling in the troubled waters of the British imperial zone, has exercised a damping role on the more swashbuckling British and French Governments; and there have been bitter recriminations amongst Atlantic Pact governments that their American allies are letting them down.

There is an ironic ring to such complaint. For it was Mr. Dulles who first formulated the principle that the art of present-day Western diplomacy consists of keeping the world constantly on the brink of war. At this, none have proved more apt and willing pupils than Mr. Eden and M. Mollet. For two months they have manoeuvred and counter* manoeuvred against a background of troop concentrations, naval exercises and military blackmail. Though the scene is set for war, Nasser fails to weaken. We are not close enough to the brink—so runs the apparent conclusion of Western diplomats. Closer to the brink! On to the "Users' Association!"

If Nasser will not resort to force, he shall be provoked. There can be no other meaning attached to the "Users' Association" scheme. In essence it is simple; without Egypt, Britain, France and satellites will form an association which will employ canal pilots; they will place a pilot aboard any one of the Association's member ships wishing to pass through the Canal; they will collect the dues for passage through the Canal.

"If the Egyptian Government should seek to interfere with the

operations of the association

. . . then that Government would again

be in breach of the Convention of

1888. ... In the event of Egyptian

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interference, the British Government would be free to take such further steps as seem to be required.

So runs Mr. Eden's threatening speech to the House of Commons. In the words of the daily paper headlines, this is the West's "Mastei Plan." There is only one term that describes it accurately, and that is piracy!

And in the annals of British capitalism, piracy is nothing new. It is recorded in history that the first great accumulations of capital which marked Britain's transition from feudalism to capitalism were acquired on the high seas, under the flag of the Jolly Roger. The wheel has turned full circle. And when the sun is beginning to set on the British Empire, it reverts to type. But three centuries have passed, and the world—so the Users' Association will doubtless find—is no longer available for the taking with broadsides and cutlasses. Colonel Nasser, who grows in stature and dignity at each new turn of the crisis, spoke not just for Egypt, but for all colonial peoples when he made it clear that Egypti will not make way for force.

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We are ready to take measures to keep ovr dignity and sovereignty" he said "but are a small country. I know that power politics can gather its navy and its troops. We will just hare to defend our rights to the last drop of our blood.... We will give an example to the world,

for we are going to keep our sovereignty and dignity

THE TRANSKEI TRAGEDY

Study in the Bantu Authorities Act)

By GOV AN MBEKI

/^ALTHOUGH the Bantu Authorities Act was passed in 1951, it is only recently that the public has been aroused to its implications. The Act purports to establish "Bantu States" or "Bantustans" within the South African State, planned on an ethnic basis. Dr. Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs and Chief Promoter of this plan, is attempting to dress up differently the lie that economic apartheid is practicable. The white electorate is told that the "Bantu" have "no place in the white man's green pastures." The 9 million Africans must develop in their own "national home" which constitutes twelve per cent of the land surface of South Africa. (When the additional 7£ million morgen promised under the 1936 Land Act is added it will become 13 per cent.)

The white man's "green pastures," consisting of 88 per cent of the land surface, are inhabited by 2-| million whites. The Africans are told that they will receive opportunities for self-development and self-government in "their own areas." Some Africans, for example the Transkeian Bunga

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and a number of Chiefs, have accepted these assurances and become parties to the implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act.

In order to examine the full motives, aims and implications of the

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Act, propose to restrict myself to one area only—the Transkei. Three years after the formation of the Union, the contracting authorities—i.e., the representatives of the white settler minorities in the Cape, Natal, O.F.S. and Transvaal—agreed to peg the land position at what it was when the last wars ended the British and Dutch scramble for land in South Africa. The 1913 Land Act gave legal fixity to the areas which are today known as Native Reserves. The largest of these Reserves is the Transkei, covering an area of 4.4 million morgen, and inhabited by 1,258,590 Africans (1951 figure).

THE HETEROGENEOUS TRANSKEI

It is a mistake to think of the Transkei as a "homogeneous" and simple area. It is a territory of great diversity and complexity, the fruits of the ruthless application of the imperialist policy of "divide and rule" by which the British were able, in the end, to conquer the Xhosa people.

For nearly a century the Xhosas pinned down the British forces in a war of attrition. In the midst of these bloody battles, the great Xhosa

Chief Hintsa, the son of Gcaleka, nevertheless permitted the Rev. John Ayliff to open a mission at Butterworth. At about the same time, in 1834, a group of refugees from Zululand sought Hintsa's protection. Hintsa, with the kindness that befitted a monarch of his stature, threw wide open the doors of his country to the destitute refugees, who subsequently earned for themselves the name of amaFengu.

Ayliff, with his hands clasped across his breast, assured the great Hintsa that he was concerned solely with man's spiritual well-being and had nothing to do with the greedy British imperialists who sought to dispossess the Xhosas of their land. But in fact Ayliff's Wesleyan mission was the forward observation post for the British forces.

The British were chafing to deliver a shattering military blow at the Xhosa armies which had for so long resisted their military onslaughts. The Xhosas were the inspiration of all African resistance to the advance of imperialism. Armed with assegais they had withstood firearms. They had dispersed the Dutch and sent them helter-skelter in search of other "green pastures" in the North. The Xhosas must be destroyed. That was the task Sir Benjamin D'Urban had set himself. He had, for this purpose, to know the disposition of Hintsa's forces.

Ayliff, "the man of God," was the only one who could provide this information.

Ayliff's medium of communication was to be the Mfengu who, as an adopted member of the Xhosa family, enjoyed the confidence of Hintsa and his people. The Mfengu had succumbed to the appeal of the words "Blessed are the poor, for they shall inherit the kingdom of

Heaven.” Destitute, he clung to Ayliff with child-like faith. Homeless, he pinned his faith in a home hereafter. The Christianised Mfengu was used as a bearer of treacherous dispatches between the Butterworth mission and D’Urban.

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When the amaFengu discovered, too late, that they had been used to betray their benefactor, they decided to follow John Ayliff, who offered to find them protection with the British forces. This defection was the beginning of a distrust which has been handed down from generation to generation. Industrial development and the spread of education have done much to uproot the distrust and heal the breach between Xhosa and Mfengu. The Government is now seeking to revive it, and all such similar antagonisms, through the operation of the Bantu Authorities Act.

A BUFFER FOR THE BRITISH

The British used the amaFengu as a buffer between themselves and Hintsa. In the Ciskei they were settled in areas between the Fish River and the Great Kei, such as the Keiskammahoek, Fort Beaufort and Peddie areas. As Hintsa's forces across the Kei River retreated, amaFengu were settled at Butterworth, Nqamakwe, Tsomo and Idutywa. The object of these settlements was always that the amaFengu should take the first shock of any attack.

This is the historical origin of these settlements; the story that the British and the missionaries were “rescuing the poor amaFengu from ill-treatment,” though still spread in official history books in the Union, is a “big lie” which can never cover up or justify Ayliff’s treachery and abuse of religion and hospitality alike.

The presence of the amaFengu is not the only factor which upsets the picture of the Transkei as an “ethnically” and tribally homogeneous area for the purpose of the reactionary Bantu Authorities Act.

Across the Bashee River, in the coastal districts of Elliotdale and Mqanduli are settled abaThembu, as in the Umtata, Engcobo and Cala districts. Cala, Glen Grey and St. Marks districts are inhabited by what are generally known as “Emigrant Thembus” under the chieftainship of Matanzima. Under the old order of things, before British imperialism, all these owed allegiance to Ngubengcuka.

Today, Pondoland is divided into East and West Pondoland, under Chiefs Botha Sigcau and Victor Poto Ndamase respectively. Under these two chieftainships attempts are made to give an outward impression of “paramountcy” over a number of districts, but the headmen, who are in fact under the direct control of the Native Commissioner, are really the most important cogs in the Reserves administrative machinery.

In the East Griqualand districts such as Mount Ayliff, Mount Frere, Matatiele we find a most heterogeneous society. In one location a Mpondomise is headman, while the adjacent location has a Mfengu or Baca or Msutu or Xhosa headman. Within a district which for purposes of “Native Administration” is known as Mpondise, such as Qumbu, there are big pockets of amaFengu, of whom Sandile Majeke

claims to be spokesman and Chief.

South, in the district of Willowvale, is Zwelidumile, Hintsas's great grandson. He is the only one of all the traditional chiefs whom the Government has consistently played down, so that his influence extends

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over only a few locations in his district. He has been deliberately overlooked for fear that if his chieftainship were encouraged, as is the case with araaPondo and abaThembu, it might be a factor tending to unite the Xhosas.

Such then is the complicated tribal structure of the Transkei. the fruits of past British intrigues, which Dr. Verwoerd proposes further to bedevil with his Bantu Authorities Act.

We must now turn to consider the bankrupt peasant economy, upon which this administrative structure has been superimposed, in order the better to understand the implications of Verwoerd's plot.

A LANDLESS PEASANTRY

'PHE 1913 Native Land and Trust Act put an end to the chapter of

history, initiated in the last century by Sir George Grey, under which it was proposed to transform the African tribespeople of the Transkei into individual peasant-smallholders on the European model. Under the 1913 Act all the land has reverted to the Trust which administers it.

There is, therefore, no freehold tenure. The present form of tenure

places the African in a position similar to that of a feudal serf.

Seven of the 26 districts have been surveyed and arable allotments averaging 8 to 10 acres (the figure in the Ciskei is 3.25 acres) have been allocated. Title to these allotments is held under the system of "quitrent" (pay rent or quit).

During the last half century not an additional acre in these districts has been set aside for arable purposes. Soon the landless class that arose as a result of the survey drifted to the unsurveyed districts, mainly the comparatively fertile coastal belt of Pondoland. Before long Pondoland had to exercise strict measures to discourage these "immigrants," otherwise it would have had no room for its own natural increase in population.

The passing of the Native Laws Amendment Act in 1936, and the subsequent tightening up of Urban Areas regulations restricting entry to towns, led to terrible distress and showed how desperately short of land the people were in the Reserves.

In a "Transkei Survey" conducted by the National Union of South African Students from 1947 to 1949, it was estimated that no less than 80,000 families had no land at all.

There is landlessness for the vast majority. But the dry farming conditions are such that even those who have arable allotments cannot

subsist. The average acreage is an uneconomic unit for the average family of six. At best the average production per acre is

2\ bags of

maize. Even under such congenial conditions as prevail at the Fort Cox Government School of Agriculture the average production per acre is no more than 7 bags—and at Fort Cox there are enough labourers and trek animals, and sufficient capital to buy fertiliser, implements and seed.

In his "Summary of the Keiskammahoek Survey," Professor D. Hobart Houghton, Professor of Economics at Rhodes University, states that the average annual income for a family is £30 19s. 7d, This is

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made up of income from both internal sources (i.e. sale of produce such as wool, hides, etc.) and external sources (i.e. cash wages sent back to their families in the Reserves by absentee labourers). The total expenditure during the same period is £36 5s.—leaving an excess of expenditure over income of £5 5s. 5d. Professor Houghton observes:—

"Family expenditure for the year varied between £251 5s. 4d. and £2 15s. 4d.. while the highest and lowest family cash incomes recorded were £355 18s. and nothing." Shocked at these findings, he asks "How . . . could an individual, let alone a whole family, subsist on an annual expenditure of only £2 15s. 4d.?" He answers, with grim irony. "Real charity is a virtue which still shines brightly in the Reserves."

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But "charity" is no answer the excess of income over expenditure. U is only met by the peasants getting deeper and deeper into debt. In 1933 it was estimated that the extent of indebtedness to the traders in the Transkei was nearly £1 million. By now it is far higher.

The traders are, however, finding it too risky to extend credit facilities where there is no security. The caution observed by the trading classes was summed up by one trader recently thus: "Who is going to

extend credit to an impoverished nation?"

("Transkei Tragedy" will be continued in the next issue of "Liberation.")

BREAK DOWN SOUTH

AFRICA'S IRON CURTAIN!

(A Reply to Mr. Kathrada)

By ALAN DOYLE

In "Liberation" of August 1956, Mr. A. M. Kathrada advocates what he calls an "international cultural boycott" of South Africa. It is a pity that he uses this rather sweeping term. A careful reading of his

article shows that all he really means is that the national liberation movement should appeal to overseas musicians, dancers and actors not to perform in our country, as a mark of protest against racial discrimination in the Union.

In my opinion the movement would not be well-advised to issue such an appeal or to expend its energies and resources in publicising it abroad to make it effective. I think it would do better to work for the multiplication of cultural contacts with foreign

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countries, and for the extension of such contacts to ever-wider sections of the population.

It is well known that some musicians have in fact refused, because of the colour bar, to visit South Africa. Among them were the world-famous violinist Isaac Stern and the dance-band leader Ted Heath. Their feelings do them credit. They have, no doubt at some financial sacrifice, obeyed their consciences and made a personal gesture against racialism.

But we should also pay tribute to such artistes as Dame Sybil Thorndyke, Yehudi Menuhin and Larry Adler who, while accepting engagements to play before White audiences in segregated halls, have also taken advantage of their visits here to express open feelings of solidarity with the Non-White peoples, and have insisted on performing before Non-White audiences too.

It is for the liberation movement of the oppressed people here to welcome all such noble-minded and spontaneous manifestations of

sympathy. They are valuable because they give us heart in our struggle for freedom and equality, and renew our conviction of the justice of our cause. They are valuable precisely because they spring, unprompted, from the artistic and social consciences of these famous cultural personalities. But it would be an idle task to seek to "organise" such manifestations of the artistic conscience, or to attempt to impose a uniform pattern of behaviour upon so exceptionally individualistic a category of people as the international celebrities of stage and concert platform.

And even if such a plan were feasible, I seriously question Mr. Kathrada's thesis that the organised refusal of large numbers of overseas performers to visit the Union would "greatly further the cause of freedom."

The heart of his argument is that such a "boycott" would teach White South Africa a lesson. He writes:—

"The perpetrators of racialism in this country derive strength and courage from the closeness that they feel to the outer world: . . . from the . . . consent and recognition that they receive from particularly the Western countries in the form of cultural and sports contact, economic and military association . . . Racialist South Africans must be made to feel more and more that they stand alone in the whole world in their belief of racial superiority."

If we glance again at the types of "contact" from which we are told the racialists derive strength and courage—"cultural, sports, economic and military"—we shall not fail to be struck by the fact that the latter two, especially "economic" are of infinitely more weight and importance than "sports" and "cultural" contact (especially in the limited meaning which Mr. Kathrada gives to the concept "cultural").

Why does he not advocate an economic boycott? It is evident that the cessation of overseas trade and investment would have an infinitely more powerful effect in making the South African ruling class 'feel the pinch of isolation from the civilised world,' than the absence of that handful of overseas actors and concert artistes who make their way to this outpost.

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Mr. Kathrada might reply that it is highly unlikely that the hard-headed businessmen and investors who trade with the Union or who profit from their holdings in our gold, diamond and uranium mines, would forfeit a penny of their gains to protest against the Union's colour bar. As a matter of fact, that very colour bar and the accompanying and interlinked cheap labour system greatly enhance the vast profits of foreign investors in our country.

Actors and artists, he might add, are more idealistic, less commercially minded, and an appeal to their better feelings might be more

likely to succeed. But that is only partly true. Many artists, especially in the West, have become completely commercialised; they will play

wherever they are paid to go. Moreover, we should not assume that all overseas cultural figures are necessarily democrats or people with

a social conscience. Far from it. The majority of British and American platform artists have expressed no protest against racial discrimination

practices, parallel to those of the Union, observed in British colonies

or in the South of the U.S.A.

I fear very much that the nett effect of Mr. Kathrada's proposal would be to keep out of South Africa only the most advanced and democratic artists and bearers of culture.

Which is exactly what the most reactionary circles in our country, including the Nationalist Party, are trying to do. That is why they have repeatedly refused visas for progressive artists to tour South Africa. That is why they ban democratic, anti-racial books and films. That is why we "cannot imagine Paul Robeson or Ram Gopal being allowed to come here." The reactionary, narrow-minded ruling groups of South Africa fear the impact of the liberating, humanist message which is at the core of all genuine culture. It prefers to see the minds of the people doped with the Hollywood film-trash and Springbok Radio soap operas which are the staple "cultural" diet in this part of the world.

This is the great weakness of Mr. Kathrada's position—that he seems to regard culture merely as "entertainment," an "unforgettable experience." He completely overlooks or ignores the dynamic social content implicit (though seldom obviously so) in true culture and fine art.

The Government is trying to set up a cultural iron curtain around South Africa. We want to tear it down! We want to see the minds and the hearts that are frozen by fear, ignorance, prejudice and superstition, opened out and warmed; set racing with daring new perspectives and visions, by life-giving contacts with the great world-stream of culture!

Instead of the sterile appeal for a "cultural boycott" (to be carried out by others) let us demand that the best of the world's talented artists be encouraged and permitted to visit our country, and that all who

wish be admitted to see and hear them. And this is an urgent demand —at a time when a huge foreign concern has acquired control over nine-tenths of South Africa's theatres and will no doubt aim to supply us with the products of the American "entertainment industry."

History is running strongly on our side in this matter. The cold

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war is thawing out, and cultural contacts are multiplying between peoples of diverse social and economic systems. In vain the petty tyrants seek to raise and buttress the dykes of censorship and travel restrictions; to keep out the seas of liberating ideas. The tides are running higher and higher. They can no more keep them out than they can keep down the Non-European peoples, insistently battering at the doors of economic advancement and culture; the doors of the universities, the libraries, the theatres and the concert halls.

ORGANISE TO DEFEAT

"GROUP AREAS"

By WALLACE MLINGESI

"Group Areas" is a new catchword for an old and accepted South African policy. The policy dates to the 1913 Land Act, and its

fundamental purpose remains unchanged, despite changes of government and great economic developments in our country.

Its purpose is simply the dispossession of peasants from their land by law, to drive them to work as labourers for the farmers, or to seek employment on the mines; in other words, the creation of a landless, unskilled, labour force, compelled to sell their only possession—their ability to work—on the labour market.

This policy, followed in other countries during their industrial revolutions, is further complicated by the fundamental policy of White Supremacy, and the cheap labour system, which makes it necessary for the standards of Non-Europeans to be kept at the lowest possible level. The most effective method of enforcing the policy has always been the gradual taking away from African and other non-white groups of their land rights, and driving them into water-tight compartments, so creating these reservoirs of cheap labour. The Union racial segregation policy is based on this system, and has been in practice since the eighteenth century. The Group Areas Act is part of this whole pattern, and is the culmination of the Indian land restrictions from 1885 onwards.

Group Areas, however, while following the same policy-pattern, has special features of its own which make it different from past legislation. In the past, the poorest were dispossessed. It was an “easy steal.” Peasants became farm-labourers and workers. Those were robbed who had least, and there was little outcry. But today, Group Areas is scraping the bottom of the bucket to answer the insatiable demand for cheap,

dispossessed labour, and its purpose is to drive into destitution and to impoverish the middle classes—particularly among the Indians—the

shopkeepers and small businessmen. It will bring about the economic strangulation of the Non-Europeans; segregate the Coloured people;

help force more Africans into the reserves; and in particular make life intolerable for the Indian people.

At the same time, it serves a second purpose—that of winning the support of a section of the white people by handing them the property and businesses stolen from the non-whites. As we know, Hitler followed this policy with great success in Germany, first literally stealing the thriving businesses and shops of German Jews, and giving them as rewards to his Nazi supporters, then later casting greedy eyes on the estates and industries belonging to the middle and upper classes of Czechoslovakia, Poland—and the whole of Europe. What a wonderful way to become rich without working for a penny! But it was open, unashamed robbery; simply taking by force what rightfully belonged to others and was the fruits of their work; a brutal, hateful policy that angered people in every country throughout the world.

And a policy identical to our Group Areas Act, as it is being applied to the Indian people of South Africa.

Let those who speak of a compromise and negotiations with the Nationalists be clear of the principal object of the Government. At best the compromisers can serve only as an information bureau, and get nothing for it; hence the failure of the policy of the Indian Organisation. Their meeting with Mr. Strijdom brought no results, since

the Government rebuked them by declaring Pageview a European area. In spite of their efforts to convince the Government that they were prepared to co-operate, and their desire for Pageview as part of the price, the Nationalists were unmoved. Why should they care—they can get what they want without the Indian Organisation. They will use them if it suits them. Hitler, too, used committees and bodies of collaborators, both among the Jews and later among the upper classes of conquered countries. When there was no longer anything to be obtained from their services, they followed their compatriots into the gas vans and concentration camps. Perhaps the logic of events will convince these local collaborators of the correctness of the Congress policy. And (he Congress movement, instead of being arrogant, will heartily welcome them. For this situation calls for unity, not only between the S.A.I.C. and the S.A.I.O., but of the entire Indian community, since all face a common enemy and a common fate.

It is an issue affecting all groups, not only property owners, but also business and professional men. and workers. The shameless decision to uproot the Non-Europeans from their homes in the Western suburbs of Johannesburg, involving more than 100,000 Africans, Coloureds and Indians, will serve as a signal for the greatest campaign of the Group Areas struggle.

We hope it will facilitate the co-ordination of the Congress movement, and eliminate the tendency of regarding a fight against the Group Areas as an affair concerning only the S.A. Indian Congress. It will

also show how mistaken are those people who are susceptible to the propaganda of the Nationalists that Group Areas only affects Indians.

The plan in this campaign will be based on the recent decisions at the All-In Conferences held in Durban and Johannesburg by the Indian Congress: the plan to build a broad, united front, not only among Non-Europeans, but among all those who oppose the inhuman measures of the Group Areas Act.

And it is interesting to see what a wide section of public opinion has been aroused by the latest measures. The robbery of thriving Indian

businesses in Pageview, and the utter disregard for human standards, has turned even the hardened stomachs of members of the United Party. Without reservations, joint action against these measures should be built on the broadest possible basis.

In terms of the resolution of the Transvaal Conference, a council of Action is established to mobilise the people to defend their homes, and to organise a day of hartal and mass prayers. A memorandum is also to be prepared together with other national organisations: "to seek the support of the Afro-Asian powers in influencing the member states of the United Nations to take necessary steps to compel the Union Government to cease violating the provisions of the United Nations Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

We, however, attach greater importance to the decision for mass struggle, while not minimising the importance of international forces. The immediate task of the Council of Action must of necessity be the establishment of the vigilance committee, as visualised in the resolution

of the anti-pass campaign recently taken by the joint executives of the Congresses, and at the Conference of the Federation of S.A. Women. The importance of the struggle on three fronts—i.e., the Group Areas, Anti-Pass and Trade Union, cannot be over-emphasised.

In a country such as South Africa, it is not easy to have one specific issue to which all others are subordinated, because of the racial set-up and different laws operating. The issue brought about by the operation of the Group Areas Act, however, brings all together under one banner, and also helps us put forward more forcefully the principles of the Freedom Charter.

Group Areas may yet prove the issue which will unite all opposition to the Nationalists in a mighty campaign to defeat injustice and open the road to a democratic South Africa.

This is the last in a series of articles on:—

THE ROLE OF CAPITALISM

IN SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY

The Destruction of Tribal Society

By H. LAWSON

THE COLONISTS

stated in our previous article that the development of a new type of commodity farming in the Cape Colony created the need for a new class of wage labourers who could be exploited by capitalist farmers. The most important potential source of wage labour was the African population of the country. This population was however organised into a subsistence economy in which there was no need for wage labour. Tribal society was both politically and economically independent, an independence which was based on its possession of adequate means of production (land and cattle). This state of affairs was intolerable to the colonists. In order to obtain African labour to exploit they had to destroy the economic and political independence of tribal society. In order to convert the free African peasant into a chained wage worker they had to rob him of his land and his cattle so that he would have to work for the white boss in order to survive. If the African was to become a source of profits then the land which he ploughed and the cattle which he tended had to become the property of the farmer.

In 1834 the number of Africans in the employ of white colonists was still very small. But in 1858 over 33,000 African workers from the Transkei were already working in the Colony. To this figure must be added the population of the Ciskei which was almost entirely

dependent on wage labour as a source of income. The destruction of the economic independence of the African had been accomplished by means of three ruthless wars of devastation. The Colonists had no chance of waging these wars with their own resources. Their role was merely that of auxiliaries for the armed forces of British Imperialism which was just as interested in the destruction of tribal society as the Colonists. Thus was born that close accord of interests between the class of South African exploiters and British Imperialism, an accord that was to determine the history of our country into our own days.

BRITISH IMPERIALISM

In discussing the interest of British Imperialism in the destruction

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of tribal society in the nineteenth century, we must begin from the fundamental fact that each stage in the development of capitalism produces its own kind of colonialism. The colonialism of the Dutch East India Company was not the same as that of the nineteenth century British traders, and the latter was not the same as that of modern Imperialism.

There have in fact been three distinct stages in the development of colonialism, and South Africa has had to go through them all in turn. The first type of colonialism, practised by the Dutch East India Company, was associated with mercantile capitalism and primitive

accumulation. It was based on methods of direct plunder of the colonial peoples. But with the rise of industrial capitalism in England a new type of colonialism appeared. The tremendous expansion of British industries led to an insatiable demand for markets for the new manufactured products. The colonies were therefore used as dumping grounds, and the robbery of the colonial peoples proceeded by means of the "peaceful" methods of trade.

The third, and final, stage of colonialism was reached in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when other industrial nations caught up with Britain. This led to the division of the world among the great capitalist powers and ushered in the period of modern Imperialism. At

this stage it was not merely trade but the export of capital which provided the main economic basis for colonialism.

It is the second period of colonialism that we are concerned with in the present article. Industrial capitalism is the enemy of subsistence

economy in every part of the world. In order to increase its markets industrial capitalism draws the whole world into its system of commodity

production. In doing so it necessarily destroys all pre-capitalist forms of production in the course of time. It must transform the independent peasant into a buyer of commodities: in other words, it must separate him from the land, the cattle, etc. on which he subsists, so that he may become a worker for money. The economic basis and political independence of tribal society had to be destroyed, so that its members could appear on the market as sellers and buyers of commodities—sellers of the commodity, labour power, and buyers of the manufactured commodities of industrial capitalism.

These aims of British capitalism established a firm alliance of interests between itself and the colonial farmers. It is the destruction of

tribal society by this alliance that provides the main theme of South African history during the major part of the 19th century. A great variety of methods was used to bring about this destruction.

Trade itself had a corrosive effect on the subsistence economy of tribal society. According to the Cambridge History, the traders "killed native industries, such as iron smelting, basket weaving, and pottery making. By so greatly increasing the range of native requirements, traders as well as missionaries threw upon the tribes a burden their subsistence economy could not bear."

All sorts of indirect methods were also used to draw the Africans into the commodity market and to create new needs for Britain's industrial products. A big programme of road building was embarked

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upon. These roads facilitated both trade and warfare. The large force of Africans employed on road construction was paid in money and such products as sugar and coffee, in order to stimulate new wants.

The wearing of European clothes was strongly encouraged.
King-

Williamstown actually had a law to this effect. After the war of 1835 Col. Smith said to the assembled chiefs: "I was highly pleased with Dadazi, he came to me neatly dressed in clothes which he had purchased ... why do you not all do so? This, England expects of her subjects."
(Jan. 1836).

Other devices used to break up the old subsistence economy in*

eluded the imposition of money fines and taxes on the African people wherever possible. At the same time, presents to chiefs usually consisted of manufactured articles, like ploughs, to encourage African buyers. Missionaries often insisted on European clothing in church and encouraged the use of other imported products. In fact, the role of the missionaries in the economic assault on subsistence society was a particularly dirty one.

This was apparent even to Governor Young, who, more outspoken than his successors, wrote about the Cape missionaries in 1800: "It appears to me that all the canting phrases of Godliness are a mere pretext . . . According to my ideas its object is clearly commercial . . .

They deal largely in European goods which they supply their proteges with to good profit." (Records of Cape Colony, Vol. 3, p. 113). He quotes the case of one merchant who carried on his business in the disguise of "Treasurer and Director of the Society in South Africa for promoting the Kingdom of Christ!"

One of the most typical and powerful representatives of the forces for which commerce was equivalent to Christianity was Thomas Fowell Buxton, the great "philanthropist" and backer of Dr. Philip. His writings afford a good insight into the aims of nineteenth century colonialism. Thus, in 1840, he speaks of "bringing forth into the market of the world some scores of millions of customers who may be taught to grow the raw materials which we require, and who require the manufactured commodities which we produce . . . The principles then which I trust to be adopted by our country are these: Free trade, free labour." However, the society which he and his religious friends formed to carry

out these purposes was not called a trading society; it went under the title of, "The Society for the Suppression of the Slave Trade and the Civilisation of Africa." In Buxton's own words, it was "designed mainly to diffuse among the African tribes the light of Christianity and the blessings of civilisation and free labour ... and to unite with the above objects the pursuit of private enterprise and profit." (Letter to Trew.)

VIOLENT METHODS

The indirect methods of assault on African subsistence economy, which we have been considering, were in fact only auxiliary means subordinated to the method of direct and violent military attack. In order to draw any appreciable number of Africans into commodity economy it was necessary first to deprive them of their chief means of

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livelihood, their land and their cattle. This, however, could only be accomplished by violent means.

The British army, aided by its colonial auxiliaries, effectively destroyed the material wealth of the Xhosa tribes in three gigantic marauding expeditions, referred to by our official historians as the sixth to eighth "Kaffir Wars," of 1835, 1847 and 1851. It was the turn of the Basutos next, and eventually the same fate overtook the Zulus and the tribes of the Transvaal. We may take the expeditions against the Xhosa as typical, setting the pattern for later attacks.

As regards the methods adopted against the Africans on these occasions, the Imperialist historian, Cory, has this to say: "The only really effective tactics . . . were to bum his huts and kraals, to drive off his cattle . . . and to destroy his corn and other food—in short, to devastate his country." (See Rise of South Africa, Vol. 5, p.365). The contemporary John Fairbairn wrote in the Cape Times in July 1835: "The conduct of the colonial forces has been unjust and ferocious beyond parallel . . . The atrocity of the proceedings of the Colonists is without parallel among civilised people. The Kaffirs are termed savages, but it is the Colonists who are most entitled to the appellation."

The material losses of the Africans were enormous. The old method of obtaining African land by trickery was replaced by methods of direct annexation and the expropriation of the tillers from the soil which had belonged to them for generations. The area between the Gamtoos and the Kei was taken away almost completely, and so later, was almost the whole of South Africa. In the expedition of 1835 alone almost 100,000 cattle were taken from the Xhosa people and in the two subsequent "wars" the same number again. So clear was the purpose of these expeditions that they were referred to as "Smithfield market cattle driving" by the participants themselves. The figures quoted above are based on official reports which undoubtedly under-estimate the actual numbers of cattle taken. If we add to these figures the losses suffered by the Basutos, Zulus and others in subsequent operations, we arrive at a figure of not less than half a million cattle taken from the African people by the forces of colonialism.

It is a favourite myth of the history text books that the impoverishment of the Xhosa tribes was due to the Nongqause cattle killing

incident. But we possess evidence that shows clearly that the destruction of the economic resources of the people had been effectively completed before the date of Nongqause. A census carried out in 1848 showed that in the Gaika district, for example, there were Only 0.74 head of cattle per person and there was no longer any land for many of the inhabitants. Conditions in other districts were no better. And this was the state of affairs before the last great "Smithfield market driving!" Cory writes of the condition of the African people in 1852: "For fifteen months the Kaffirs had been driven from place to place: semi-starvation was rampant in consequence of the systematic destruction of the crops by the invading forces." (Vol. 5, p.450.) Compared to these factors Nongqause was a trivial matter; which was however

admirably suited to the purposes of those historians who wanted cover up the truth.

In any case, it is well to remember that the agitation which preceded the cattle killing had a rational basis which is usually conveniently forgotten by our historians. It appears that the main content of the agitation was concerned with certain allies of the Africans, enemies of the British, who were expected to appear from afar and make an end to colonial rule. The cattle killing injunction was probably added to this by certain elements at a later date. Now, the expectation of help from outside was definitely based on news of the Crimean War

against Russia on which Britain had embarked two years previously.

This war resulted in a considerable reduction in the British garrison at the Cape, a fact which had certainly not escaped the notice of the Africans. With the hope of despair they exaggerated the power of these new enemies of Britain; but they were objectively correct in regarding them as their allies.

The pronouncements of the highest British authorities at the time make it quite clear that their destruction of African society was the result of a deliberate policy, and that they were very much aware of their economic aims in South Africa. Colonial Secretary Grey always gave most explicit instructions to the governors as to the policies they were to pursue against the Africans. Thus he writes to Smith at the time of "Smithfield market": "I cannot too strongly express my opinion that . . . you should not allow hostilities to be concluded by anything but their (the Africans*) complete subjection and unconditional surrender." In 1849 he had given the reasons for such a ferocious policy:

"I regard it as desirable that these people (the Africans) should be placed in circumstances in which they should find regular industry

necessary for their subsistence"; in other words, they had to be deprived of their livelihood in order to be converted into wage workers. Moreover, he warned Smith to take care "that the natives do not by their payments and by occupations unlimited in extent acquire extensive vested interests in land to the prejudice of European settlers." The class alliance between British Imperialist and white farmer was to be maintained at the cost of the African. .

Smith faithfully relayed the aims of his employers to the African people. At the close of the second big campaign he announced his aims:

it is an important object to teach the Kaffirs the use of money and to clothe themselves." And to the defeated chiefs he said: "You shall

have traders and you must teach your people to bring gum, hides, timber and so on to sell, that you may learn the art of money and buy for yourselves. You must learn that it is money which makes people rich." (Jan. 1836.)

The British Government spent millions of pounds financing the marauding expeditions that ruined the African people. Without this backing these expeditions could never have had the success they did. But

the expenditure of huge sums on wars of destruction was thought justified by the promise of bigger profits which the breaking of African

economic and political independence would bring to British capitalism.

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