

5th Alfred and Winifred Hoernlé Memorial Lecture

Africa beyond the Union

W M Macmillan

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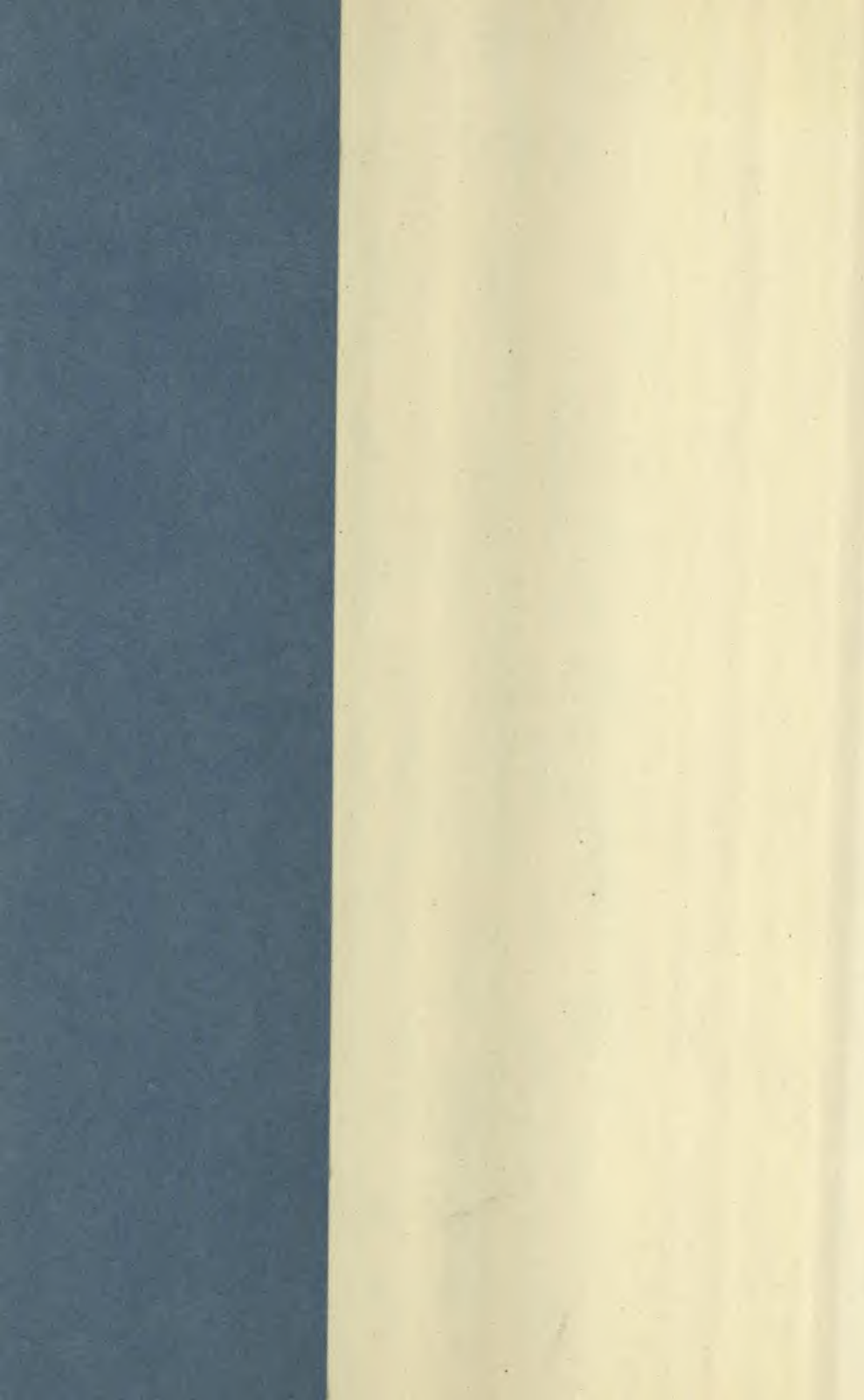
By

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HOERNLÉ MEMORIAL LECTURE

A lecture, entitled the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture (in memory of the late Professor R. F. Alfred Hoernlé, President of the Institute from 1934 to 1943), will be delivered once a year under the auspices of the South African Institute of Race Relations. An invitation to deliver the lecture will be extended each year to some person having special knowledge and experience of racial problems in Africa or elsewhere.

It is hoped that the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture will provide a platform for constructive and helpful contributions to thought and action. While the lecturers will be entirely free to express their own views, which may not be those of the Institute as expressed in its formal decisions, it is hoped that lecturers will be guided by the Institute's declaration of policy that "scientific study and research must be allied with the fullest recognition of the human reactions to changing racial situations; that respectful regard must be paid to the traditions and usages of various national, racial and tribal groups which comprise the population; and that due account must be taken of opposing views earnestly held."

Africa Beyond the Union

MY thanks are due for the honour of being allowed to try to follow in what I heard Dr. Brookes describe the other day as an Apostolic Succession, to join in a series of lectures which is a dedicated attempt to carry on the work of those who have gone before; in particular, Alfred Hoernlé. We meet acutely aware that since last year J. H. Hofmeyr has also gone from us. I have, of course, been out of touch but I am glad to think now that I knew "Hoffie's" ways well enough to get one recent last glimpse of him. We happened to be in London at the same time, and good and early one morning I stood by at the office in Trafalgar Square and caught him before his day of conferences. We talked so hard and fast that I don't know if it was for 10 minutes or 25—characteristically he drew me more on Africa than I did him on South Africa, but I got enough to discover, what you knew already, how he went on growing in mental and moral stature to the end—which makes his loss the more grievous. May the succession continue of those like him and Alfred Hoernlé whom we commemorate tonight. Many, I suppose every one here, knew of him as scholar and teacher, leader in the work of this Institute. A few of us knew the man. I met him first in the days when he blew like a fresh sea-breeze through S.A.C.S., now the University of Cape Town. It is in character that I have a vivid memory of the impression he at once made but no recollection whatever of the time or circumstances of the meeting. I am very glad to-night to be able to bring a tribute from the ancient University of St. Andrew's where he began his teaching still earlier and where he is not quite forgotten after nearly 50 years. The old Principal assured me lately: "Alfred Hoernlé was a very popular young man". He also gave an unrecorded instance of the reason why—of his zeal and physical energy, and also of the even then orderly and classifying turn of mind for which he was so well known later. It seems that on the eve

of a vacation trip to the Continent, he must be doing his share in a tennis match, away, at Newport, arranging to pick up his baggage at our famous Leuchars Junction after the game. Unluckily, one bag went astray and next day he found himself on the Channel steamer with none but the tennis trousers he stood up in: (a) the jackets, horrid things to pack! were in the bigger case: the trousers (b) were all in the other—and (b) was missing! I think that memory may give those to whom Alfred Hoernlé was only a figure or a name, a glimpse of the real man behind the figure you saw grow to be one of that handful of choice spirits who make a university education worth while by bringing youth into direct touch with what is best in the national life and in international thought. In something of the spirit that inspired all his work I venture on the formidable, perhaps presumptuous, task of helping you to see the affairs that vex you from a wide all-Africa angle.

African Context

For my own part I think a story that has been going the rounds suggests the appropriate opening: when a certain professor lately got back to his post, after years of politically-enforced exile, he is said to have begun "As I was saying when we were interrupted seven years ago . . . !" I have not been a political exile but would at any rate begin very much where I left off to this extent, that the travels that took me away were begun from Johannesburg fully 20 years ago in the hope of getting a better understanding of South Africa by seeing it in its true, *i.e.* African, context. Beyond the Zambesi, on the Niger or the Upper Nile, I have always had an eye for what had a bearing on life by the Tugela, or the Kei, or the Orange, or the Eerste Rivier. As far as that goes, I will still claim to be *tweetalig!* but being very newly returned I would fain have got my bearings again and my bilingual facility without having first to set myself this appalling problem of selecting and generalizing. I had hoped, rather, to talk it over quietly and exchange impressions and hard detail with all sorts of people; which is the right and proper way of it most times. Except, perhaps, in remote places like the Transkei, South Africa, I fear, still knows and practises too little the absorbing pastime of talking the African "shop" that should be, and is so far from being, the raw material of political thinking in the Union. I really know nothing like the endless flow of hard thinking done aloud—by day and night, at the boma or out in the bush, on

East and West Coast voyages—by devoted men and women whose whole life is given—waking or resting—to hard, often exasperating work for the making or re-making of this Africa of ours. If I have anything to say to you now I owe it to a little observing but mostly to the privilege of hearing such talk up and down the continent these years past, very little distracted by mere politics.

It is a legacy of history, or was in South Africa as I used to know it, that a great deal of effort goes in contention instead of being given to the quiet, hard, disinterested thinking I am commending. Even a laugh can help, as our Africans know so well. I laughed recently at the first newspaper poster I had seen for many years (we are not allowed them in the U.K.). This gem: "Apartheid—ingestel in die stasie—in die stad"!—the national policy applied in the suburban railway station—the journey unspecified, and it not being very clear if any journey at all is contemplated! I think a laugh is the permissible answer, perhaps the only one. Those who are downcast by such a negation of policy must beware of undue pessimism and the danger of being themselves driven to becoming too merely denunciatory. It is the advantage of the bigger Africa beyond that it is impossible there to be hag-ridden by the past. Everything is new; a whole world is evidently in the making—and what needs making or remedying there is fundamentally the same as in the Union. I confess it was years before I had quite got rid of the feeling that here was the chance to study to avoid repeating South African mistakes. I have come to what is, I hope, a more positive way. There is, of course, no such thing as a clear-cut, final way out of all our troubles. I never thought there was and often, of old, had to protest that as a historian by trade I could not undertake to foretell the consequence 500 years hence of action that I thought seemed expedient at the moment. I do not suggest now that it is enough to get busy and "do something about it". But I am quite clear it gets nowhere to be for ever harping on what South Africa, let us say, ought *not* to be doing. It is enough, and all we can do, to try so to live and work in the moment as to leave things as tidy as we can for those who follow us in the future.

Local Variety

It is relevant to remind you, in a word, how very big that bigger Africa really is. The Union is quite a large country as units go, yet it is less than one twentieth part of the whole, in spite of a fully proportionate share of desert. A characteristic

sameness about much of this huge mass is no less remarkable than its astonishing local variety. In Nigeria, for example, or in a smaller unit like Uganda, there is usually a distinct geographical or climatic basis for tribal or district boundaries. Yet fly over the famous Kenya Highlands and for the larger part, excepting Mounts Elgon and Kenya, you will hardly notice even this region as peculiar. On a huge scale there is all the variety in sameness that marks the endlessly-surprising Low Veld of the Transvaal—which I never heard anyone dare to call monotonous or tame. There is real local knowledge in the old tag: *ex Africa semper aliquid novi!*

There is, of course, no easy generalizing about the people. The total number is very uncertain—the economic conditions are certainly incapable yet of supporting a dense or absolutely large population, and I gravely doubt if the evidence of social betterment is yet enough to warrant alarmist deductions about a rapid rate of increase overtaking the still scanty means of subsistence. As in the Union, numbers were probably originally larger than the earliest European incomers allowed for—a proportion of any alleged or apparent increase is accounted for by better census taking. On the face of things, labour is positively short for the very large development plans afoot almost everywhere, so that fears of over-population are at least premature. To be sure, *redistribution* may be a hard nut, but there should still be time to take calm thought about it.

It is a peculiarity, not to say a danger, that so much of the serious thinking is necessarily still the province of the tiny European minority, and of outsiders. That, no doubt, is changing, probably fast. African opinion (the little that is expressed) may be more vocal than it is profound; it is certainly more distracted by rival counsels than in older times when liberal doctrine was virtually unchallenged. But there is no doubt that the future now depends above all on the extent to which the main lines of policy, truly fitted to the needs of the situation, are agreed to and accepted by local opinion. You need go no farther away than the West Coast for evidence that the best-intentioned administration can be paralysed by obstruction and suspicion. It is futile to dismiss this as the work of a noisy opposition, clamorous, unrepresentative and ill-informed: it is all these things: but somehow it has got to be overcome so as to give at least a preponderance of consent. There are, for comfort, at least units like some in Kenya where local opinion has been turned from opposition to wholehearted co-operation, if only in the essential work of conserving the soil. The first

example, that of effective obstruction (it only happens to be West Coast) is a warning to any South Africans who hope or fondly imagine—and a reassurance to any who fear—that there is any practical possibility of imposing a prefabricated policy on Africa as a whole. That cannot be done. But the second example shows that co-operation can be successfully won (almost I had said “as usual”) by the persuasive human influence of two or three individuals—administrative and agricultural officers who not only worked on, and with, a forward-looking African chief, but really got effective popular agreement.

European Make-up

This gives point to a word here on the make-up of the European minority. A great deal of African debate is characterized by heat rather than light just because so many in the opposing camps fail to keep a true sense of proportion. Look at the map again: Southern Rhodesia has much the biggest white community outside the Union, and—with the utmost respect for its positive side—what a drop it is in the African ocean! The White Highlands of Kenya is another little centre of work of great significance. The Highlands were first noticed at all only about sixty years ago and might easily be missed altogether, unless, of course, you happen to be feeling a grievance about it. In the rest of the East and Central group of colonies permanent white settlers and estate owners are to be counted at most in hundreds. West Africa, to its serious loss, I think, has almost none at all; so that in the tropical countries as a whole the Whites are incredibly lonely and scattered.

Leadership, therefore, or direction I should say, depends on that most important class, the officials—and on them really much more than on the Colonial Office. The merits and the demerits of the colonial system are what they may be, but at any rate the personnel of the administrative service is outstandingly good, its work supremely just and impartial. The Colonies to-day are getting the very cream of the British universities and a sprinkling from the Dominions. The service attracts men of the same intellectual calibre as formerly made the “I.C.S.” justly famous, and the selectors now wisely make as much allowance for other than purely intellectual qualities as may make the service less cold, not to say more human, than its famous prototype was sometimes said to be. The many scientific and technical services are rapidly growing to even greater importance but have not hitherto been, perhaps, quite such a

draw—at the moment there is a desperate shortage in the all-important medical branch—but the magnetism of Africa or the inspiration of the work itself draws many, and makes and keeps the life-long devotion of most who try it. Here is an instance where what goes for one class goes for all classes of the slender white community.

There are the missionaries, who were long the only teachers, and necessarily have deep African roots. Historically they often preceded the traders—and, indeed, the local and retail trade has now largely passed to or, more accurately perhaps, been developed by others: Indians in the east, Syrians in the west. Mining may be important, but it is by its nature highly localized in self-contained, rather aloof units. Industries are often estates and may be more widely distributed. But they are very thinly spread. It is the characteristic upshot that all these groups between them—and there are no others—fail to add up to a coherent whole, or to give the tropical colonies anything like a complete or even fully characteristic European society.

Harmonious Co-operation

It is an outstanding impression of much coming and going in the tropical colonies that just because of their isolation the vast majority of the Europeans who matter, unofficials no less than officials, are heart and soul in the work that takes and keeps them there; their outlook or their main interest is broadly African: they know very well that their own future and that of their kind has nothing to hope from numbers: quantitative competition with the African majority is flatly impossible; all depends on the quality of their own work, and on achieving harmonious co-operation with others. I may seem to labour this point. South Africans rightly and properly express increasing interest, at times almost a proprietary interest in the Africa beyond. They have much to give: conditions are not dissimilar and their experience, rightly applied, should give them a surer touch than others coming fresh to it all from Europe. They must, however, be realist and cease to think they can limit their interest to guarding themselves or the fortunes of the white handful. They must not forget that Europeans in the tropics must and can only feel themselves as having part in a vast continent-wide enterprise. If this brings only strife, or fails, then for them all has failed. There is no future in a void.

For all its size there is no great difficulty in picking out the facts that decisively condition African development, though it

is quite possible to be led astray. Coming to it fresh from the crowded poverty and ruination, as they certainly were then, of Herschel or the Ciskei. I noted a much greater variety of food, and certainly no shortage of land. Only the other day I still found myself less shaken than I was expected to be by the sight of the notorious soil denudation in the Wakamba country about Machakos in Kenya. My earliest impression was of a potentially fruitful country awaiting a concentrated but leisurely process of economic development. This was still the early thirties. Of course, doubts and questions at once obtruded—agriculture is the obvious basis of development, but agriculture is a new and difficult art in tropical conditions—and not for illiterate African peasants only; experience gained in the temperate zone does not necessarily apply: vast stretches of tsetse fly country are without cattle and therefore short of protein and without manure, and almost all wholly dependent upon the vagaries of rainfall.

Basic Research

I need not add, it is notorious, how much depends on the work of peasants who even yet seldom produce food enough to last until the next crop; whose diet, in spite of first appearances, is insufficiently varied to make men normally resistant to the onset of disease; and whose manner of living makes them the easy victims of all kinds of afflictions, tropical and non-tropical. In face of peculiarities like these the remedy lies first with the common man rather than the specialist. This is important and easily forgotten. The wide new field of tropical agriculture and the fearful devastation still caused by tropical diseases may suggest that Africa needs, above all, what is called basic research. For those whose talents and interest lie that way, Africa is, of course, about the richest field in the world, but it is a mistake to give pure research anything like first "priority". The more you see of it the more you will realise that, as I have quoted before now, it is not specialists that are needed so much as the G.P.—general practitioners of all the arts and sciences: men and women who will apply the fruits of past research and experience and give Africa the benefits of knowledge which is an embodied part of our own material civilization. There is need, too, of elementary social technique. Reliable statistics take years to collect, and for want of them it is hard to plan what is now called "development". The present and the probable future size of the population is still most uncertain. Your tea-planter takes a serious risk if he goes ahead without reasonably sure recorded evidence of a sufficient and especially a well-distributed rainfall.

Roads and railways struggle to-day with hairpin bends or (Sierra Leone being an extreme example) with gradients that impossibly increase the cost per ton-mile and reduce the traffic; this is largely because the pioneers of yesterday had to get to work with a very imperfect land survey or none at all. South Africans know all about water supplies—their cost and the work they involve, little of it “research”: in the tropics water is doubly important, for the health of man and to save the grazing from being ruined by the trampling of the beasts; but even yet very few towns and scarcely any villages or land-holdings have the water “laid on”. As in the Union itself, for that matter, plain, descriptive facts need, in broadcasting jargon, to be “plugged”.

It is this mass of elementary needs and wants that has to be met, and of course it is a vicious circle—it is a good deal because simple needs are now lacking that the people of this vast country are such a weak prop to have to rely on in the struggle to provide what is missing.

Material Weakness

I have run away from the process I had in mind, of recording my own mental development since I first went north, as one way that occurred to me of helping your own study of Africa. In the early thirties a great many writers and teachers were making too light of this basic weakness—the material wants and, largely in consequence, the human shortcomings of the African people. The experts were, at any rate, playing up too much the possibility of building anew on the truly African foundation of African institutions. I do not think this was ever a marked characteristic of South African thinking, but the fashionable doctrine got its vogue by a not unnatural mis-reading of the South African situation at that time. It was only in the twenties that we here became acutely aware that South Africa had failed, in the jargon of the day, “to solve its Native problem”. Yet, just before that, the First War had made observers for the first time aware of African peasants as considerable primary producers, growing almost rich on cotton in Uganda, cocoa in the Gold Coast, ground-nuts in Nigeria and the Gambia. The contrast with South Africa was impressive; the actual achievement, certainly the security of its foundations, was over-confidently acclaimed. It came to be widely accepted that African society could best find its own level, that the “impact” (that is one blessed word!) the impact of civilization was the cause of South African social disintegration, and tribal society elsewhere should

be screened as far as possible from disruptive "contact" (that is a second blessed word). It is my own reading of history that it was a poor little England before the Norman Conquest brought it into Western Europe, and that even Scotland benefited from "contact" with Celtic—they do say Irish!—missionaries. In those days war had left liberal Europe gravely disillusioned, especially its old leader, England; it was therefore perilously easy to accept the doctrine of "leave well alone" in Africa, and to forget our responsibility for giving of our experience. Indirect Rule, so called, was a notable experiment in local government—its progress was gravely hindered by its being made almost a cult of the dominant heresy which asserted the danger of contact.

Of course, Indirect Rule had lessons for South Africa. It stands in history as the first serious attempt to give African people some responsibility for the work of African development and government. First in Tanganyika in 1930, and still more three years later in Nigeria, it was heartening to see so many of the people of the country sufficiently well educated to play their part in posts and occupations that fully better educated Natives of South Africa were either not allowed to touch or were deemed incapable of. I will not say more than that it would ease some political tensions, and save a deal of money for useful purposes, to be bolder in such experimenting here. Boldness should be easier here—if only it will really devolve responsibility the much stronger South African society is better placed than the slender colonial administrative staff to back up its advice with gentle but very necessary supervision and guidance. The vivid first impression of the West Africa of 1933 remains with me, an altogether salutary contrast with the Union of that day. The devoted effort to get the people trained to doing their own work was right and hopeful—however much later experience has disappointed. Indirect Rule may sometimes have made false starts or none at all; its principle continued to be "Go Slow" and even in West Africa began altogether too late.

After all, theory at once neglected the foundations and taught that they were stronger than they are: and theory erred. This optimism was an advance on the old habit of counting all the Natives of Africa as an inferior class of being—there is, of course, no such general class for many thousands of upstanding individuals to fit into. I feel I might be expected to concentrate on telling you about some of these and on giving examples of progress and solid achievement in the greater Africa—I might be

practical and speak of the promising terrace cultivation, and the beginnings of communal farming I have seen lately both in the Kavirondo country of Kenya and in western Uganda. Could I even hit the headlines with a sensational slogan? It is being authoritatively said, and I have seen in practice, that the only final cure for the wasted tribal reserves is "Not fewer cattle, but MORE!" (I have seen the hope for the future—the cloud no bigger than a man's head—a controlled plot on one reserve where five fat beasts, the maximum number allowed, just could not cope with the grass on a ley their own stored manure had helped to grow.) Or I might be cultural and enlarge on achievement in sculpture and painting, not forgetting the strikingly-beautiful dresses made and worn by the women of Buganda. There is no advance on South African achievement in the many developing schools and university colleges, but no one is entitled to generalize about "the African" without taking account of the active middle-class communities established in modern, suburban houses up and down the West Coast, and, above all, of the rather lonely upper fringe of really cultivated professional people, chiefly but not at all exclusively West and South African.

Perilous Isolation

Some of the story of such "Enterprise and Achievement" has been broadcast lately and I must leave it—some of the enthusiasts are less complacent than they used to be, but I am going to be severely realist and consider rather the obstacles in the way of still further progress. These have been too much glossed over. The thirties rightly and properly reacted against the old, not to say South African, view of that abstraction "native mentality", but in doing so almost left out of sight the backwardness of the vast majority and the perilous isolation of all African intellectuals. The times make it easier now to assess the situation. This is partly because the catastrophic Second Great War did at least counteract the disillusionment of the 1920's. Western Europe came so near to losing all that makes life worth living that there is certainly more awareness now of the value of our spiritual heritage, and a stronger body of opinion indisposed to be moved to discard it altogether and start afresh. There is less disposition, therefore, to think that we should take no direct part in the re-making of Africa. Now that we see African society more nearly as it is we do not even need to feel that it is all our fault, the result either of "exploitation" or of sheer neglect. It is true the *laissez faire* economic theory

long made governments almost as aloof and negative as the critics of "contact" could have wished. Fortunately Christianity was also generally professed in those days and Christian missionaries did much, with very little help, to lay some foundations for African education. It is evidence of how right their attempt was that to-day the age and the strength of its mission churches is no bad gauge of the quality of any African community's leadership and attainment—for the reassurance and comfort of some of us, the Cape of Good Hope is still in the van.

There is a neglected clue there. Material advancement is recognized in these days as a necessity if these backward communities are ever to pay for their own administration and for the schools and social services they all begin to look for. It is obvious that the work they are set to do even for their own advancement lacks quality and is costly; African "labour" needs training, and by no means always gets it, as well as supervision. And, of course, the work they did and still do for their own subsistence also gets poor results because poor diet and ill-health are much as they always were, and also for want of the best tools and of the skill to use them. The truth is that Africa is no exception to the rule that all communities owe their character to slowly-acquired, as a rule inherited, skills which also give them standards of value and conduct: and Africa is all but destitute of tradition. Nor can she hope to take her place in any community of nations without a common morality which must bind more than the members of a single clan or tribe: Bernard Shaw put it in a nutshell recently when he postulated acceptance of the Decalogue of Moses (or most of it) as the only possible basis even of a Shavian socialist society. Much modern development planning ignores this fact.

European Stimulus

"How shall they learn without a teacher?" we may think and quote. I have no doubt myself that European help is the only answer. It is my growing impression that the West Coast, for all its progress, has not made even more progress just for want of the stimulus of European example. I cannot see how these all-African communities are to attain right standards of measurement otherwise than by examples to measure from, how else they are to see and learn to demand the highest standards in agriculture, or indeed in any walk of life. Contrary to the view generally held in the 1930's, the mixed communities of East Africa—and also the Union if it will—have thus a real opportunity of doing better. But unwilling pupils are ill to teach, and

a very new situation is arising. We at last begin to see the African situation much more clearly than ever before, but teachers (in the widest sense) are fewer than the needs demand, and the presumed pupils too full of suspicious questionings any longer to be willing learners. I doubt if many are really drawn away to seek the short cuts preached by rival teachers—suspicion and distrust are sufficient explanation of happenings like those of last year in what we thought was the relatively prosperous and progressive Gold Coast. Because of this widely-prevalent state of mind anything like a mission to Africa is very much harder than it might have been a generation ago. The Second Great War may have made us surer of ourselves than we were, and of our neighbourly duty; but the same shock produced economic disorders in the colonies, and out of these an acute psychological disturbance which makes it very difficult now to be sure of getting the indispensable co-operation and consent I spoke of in the beginning, in response to any efforts we may make. "Africa" some would say, if that is not a meaningless generalization, is waking up, and has already become self-conscious. Even if they are only a fraction of the whole we have to take account now of the strongly-expressed imaginings of people unmistakably fired with the spirit of nationalism—African nationalism.

I say advisedly the *spirit* of nationalism—the sensitive state of feeling which characterizes nationalist movements everywhere is spreading all over Africa but is, of course, unorganized, not to say incoherent. It makes it no easier that there are so many utterly different parts even of Nigeria or the smaller Gold Coast, and innumerable fragments and sub-divisions both there and in Kenya, Uganda and every other of these artificial units—and yet also a growing body of individuals cherishing similar, more or less vague feelings of resentment in each and all of them. An imperfect but improving use of English gets more and more individuals talking the same language; and no one must think that this, at least, is a danger that could be avoided. If it links the malcontents it certainly also acts the other way. They cannot share our knowledge and co-operate with us as we would hope unless we have some common medium—the well-meant but ill-advised preference long given to Swahili in East African schools has positively helped to keep the East relatively backward and is mercifully now breaking down. Nothing is so much resented as anything that looks like putting obstructions in the way of their learning English, which to them is the master key to the gate of knowledge.

Legacy of Fear

The cause of this emotional disturbance includes, as elsewhere, a historical element, a legacy of fear and distrust which is very often associated with memories of dealings affecting the possession of land. Only the other day I thought I could see something like folk-memory in the making: my cheerful Kikuyu driver was boasting that he was born on the site of the famous Norfolk Hotel and was clearly not far from cherishing almost a personal interest in its profits! In fact this man was probably one of x grandchildren born hereabouts; it is not hard to imagine how many multiples of x grandchildren in the next generation will develop even sharper feelings about the whole of Nairobi unless Kikuyu energies can be diverted from vain imaginings to some more satisfactory activity, economic and mental. As things are, the Kikuyu are of an unusually political turn of mind and have many sympathisers elsewhere. At only a short remove, rumours of happenings in Kenya make many in Uganda distrustful, and perhaps less co-operative than they might be in matters that are of vital common interest to East Africa as a whole. Nyasaland and N. Rhodesia obviously have similar feelings about S. Rhodesia, and West Africa stands on guard against ideas imported from East Africa, just as both East and West unhappily fear and distrust South African precept and example. I will only say that in substance and in detail the facts behind all this fear and distrust have just a little more historical justification than the South African legend it was my lot once to investigate—the traditional account of the doings, a hundred years ago, of the Rev. Dr. John Philip! It is not for South Africa to throw stones back. History is full of instances of how bitter memories, often false and always futile, are best wiped out by the activities arising from a new and more satisfactory way of life; we would and must all work to that end.

There are positive grounds for the stirrings of African nationalism. It was natural that educated West Africans should be the first to challenge the contradiction, recognized as such by the Ancient Greeks, between the democracy preached and the empire practised by their white ruler. The instinct which was the mother of our own political freedom rebels against the unfettered power of any ruler—though some forget that the principle holds whether the tyranny be external or internal. English history, moreover, is very largely the record of a struggle to reconcile our freedom with its desirable accompaniment, efficiency. Promises of self-government, in due time, do not of themselves go very far even towards effecting such a reconcilia-

tion in the colonies. It is a common mistake, nonetheless, to suppose that the onus for finding the way out rests on the ruler alone, or is even possible without a very material contribution from the side of the colonial people themselves. A solution is not so easy as all that, and is not furthered by stirring up false sentiment: the West Coast, for example, has no excuse for nursing fear or grievance about alienated land, and memories of the slave trade are only more vague and unreal than loose allegations of more modern "exploitation". On the sound constitutional maxim that "the King's government must go on"—it only happens to be an English tag—Colonial governments cannot walk out, regardless of who or what is to succeed to the responsibilities which, however they originated, are now firmly on them. At present their African nationalist critics characteristically always make politics take precedence of economics and perhaps of morals: their newspapers show them ambitious for political and constitutional power and office, neglectful of the facts of economics on which their revenue and welfare depend, and quite regardless of indigenous ills like malaria and tsetse flies. The Colonial Governments to-day are certainly tolerant of the wildest criticism. In their zeal to consult the wishes of the ruled they are weak rather than despotic. The ruled now make little effective use of existing machinery and it is reasonable to fear that the alternatives to colonial rule must be either a break-up into contending factions or, more probably, the dictatorship of a proletariat of which there is certainly no authentic African specimen anywhere outside the Union, if even there.

Fuller Contribution

I have argued that there is no way out in Africa without European example and help. It is, however, idle for Africans, or our voluble world critics, to imagine that Great Britain—or South Africa—can do anything effective by themselves: the first need now is a much fuller African contribution than has ever yet been forthcoming. If I stress this more than usual it is by way of a compliment: the progress so many Africans have already made weights the balance enough to prove that the future depends on themselves; on their making further progress; and, above all, on the spiritual quality of their progress. The many solid and responsible African Councillors who are the comfort and reliance of the colonial administrations may always need prodding; as things are, they are in danger of losing all effective influence to wild young sentimentalists like one I

encountered at a university lately—a ready constitution-maker who had taken little notice of, and certainly could not name, that bane of his own people's life, the tsetse fly! This latter class have their equally sentimental European sympathisers. "Ground-nuts" is a sore subject in some British quarters! The ground-nut scheme will yet serve a good purpose, but there is little doubt plans were sent awry by political pressure from enthusiasts of the school which puts down all the ills of Africa to "exploitation". They were out to build anew by a mere gesture. Africa is too difficult a continent, its physical conditions are too intractable, its human relationships far too complex, to give any hope of a good issue to the efforts of those who set to work in a spirit of fear and distrust or of mere prejudice.

The gravest threat to future well-being is, in fact, in these days, the inflamed and excited state of African feelings in widely different parts of the continent—I speak strictly to my text and leave it to you to include or exclude the Union. The suspicion that is rife never stops to examine its bases; the excitement is a good deal of it growing-pains, and for the rest, be the provocation what it may, I again insist that African opinion has got to take its own full share of responsibility for removing the barriers to understanding and progress. I spoke of growing-pains—are the Africans who rightly claim equal treatment ready to suffer the *pains* of equality?; at the university, for example, to put up with the same haughty superiority and the mental discipline we, as freshmen, endured at the hands of budding graduates? I gravely fear they expect and much prefer most favoured nation treatment! On what some would make the crucial issue of colour—some West Africans have most unnecessarily complicated existence by importing colour consciousness, chiefly but not only from America, and the question of colour, as such, now obtrudes itself and fogs the real issues as much in Britain as in the Union. For myself, I learned above all in the predominantly coloured West Indies how little a man's colour has to do with anything except his own and a few other people's feelings. I have come on since to think (or perhaps feel?) that soothed feelings are more inducive of sleep than they are evocative of the energy needed to work the regeneration of Africa!

Black versus White

By any way of it there is a naughty spirit abroad. I have done what I could in my day to fight one colour bar, and now take leave to say the thing is no more desirable when it is

inverted and sets black to bar white. This equally unlovely manifestation shows a most un-African lack of humour and gets men trailing their coats, in Britain and elsewhere, watching for slights and insults—and of course, seeking, they find them. Only common sense and ordinary considerations of convenience, not sentiment, can rightly govern personal relations. In normal society we all fall into cliques and clubs and commonly visit the houses only of a few with whom we share special interests. If any of our intimate circle are of a different colour from ourselves, we are the more richly blessed in our (I had almost said) "contacts"! It is fair to claim that, excepting a handful elsewhere who are like-minded with conscientious doctrinaires in the Union, most responsible Europeans now denounce and repudiate the idea of a colour bar. The denunciation is so complete and emphatic from the white side that coloured leaders actually overlook the responsibility resting on them to help smooth the difficult historical transition to a more harmonious world order. It is natural enough, there is no need to assess blame, that the unreason of overwrought young men of African stock is now a major obstacle in the way of African regeneration. In a fully adult society all the members are mutually responsible. "Who is my neighbour?" it was asked long ago—the question has to be answered by black as well as white, and the answer can only be in the spirit of that other disregarded phrase, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors".

Certainly African development will be bogged down if it continues to be, or becomes even more, a matter of strife and contention. I have suggested as evidence in favour of a joint effort that mixed East Africa may be overhauling the much longer sophisticated West Coast. The Union, too, has important advantages—its Native newspapers are, in general, more realist than their contemporaries elsewhere, and, be the political situation what it may at any moment, they are realist because, protest as they may, black and white recognize each other as an inevitable part of the South African make-up. Neither seriously thinks it can throw the other out of the country. That is not true everywhere: it is a useful first step on the long road to eventual accommodation that they have got to learn to go on together.

Meantime effectual co-operation lingers, and is little helped by certain attempts to promote African welfare by rather "unilateral" help from outside. The United Nations now seeks to make Africa the concern of the whole world before Africa has learned to speak for itself, or just because it cannot

so speak. The idea of asserting that we are members one of another is admirable: the manner of asserting it in the Trusteeship Council flies in the face of all relevant experience of how to govern mixed and backward communities. For example, British colonial practice is belatedly but rapidly breaking away everywhere from the disastrous tradition which subjected the responsible administration to the continuous criticism of a permanent minority, the unofficial members of a legislative council which had no direct share in that responsibility. The unofficial majority is now almost general, justifying a claim that government is, as it were, by Quaker Meeting (that admirable institution which never votes, but takes, and is guided by, the general consensus of opinion among its members). Modern colonial governments, in short, must find and keep in touch with the general sense of opinion in the country, and are on the whole successfully doing so. Here, on the contrary, is the U.N. Council throwing the affairs of the countries under trusteeship open to continuous general debate by strangers who have been guilty of talk more completely irresponsible than ever disgraced any old-time Legislative Council. It is extraordinary how much of it comes from ardent champions of self-government where they themselves are concerned. As a result, the administrations are continuously employed in answering questions about defects in their own work, from which the writing of U.N. reports hopelessly distracts them. Regard for the welfare of an important unit like Tanganyika would make it the only answer to stand out firmly and fight for a root and branch reform of the trusteeship system.

Liberian Example

Another, this time a specifically American answer to the African question, fails to answer it any better. America, whether she acknowledges it or not, is solely responsible for the very existence of the Liberian Republic, where a handful of enfranchised citizens rules—or taxes and for the most part fails to administer—something like two million “aborigines”. The economic life of the country lately depended wholly on the activities of one great American enterprise. This enterprise, as I saw it, was enlightened and beneficent as private ventures go: had it not been, there was little the Republic could do about controlling its activities, short of making them altogether impossible—which would have cut off its own means of subsistence. Lately, an even greater corporation is for undertaking the development of Liberian resources. This is a modern version

of the old-type chartered company, and it may serve a useful economic turn. Politically it has, of course, being American, no such even provisional governmental authority or responsibility as, say, the original British South Africa Co., and this, on the face of it, would make it even less easy to bring to book and hold accountable. Liberia is not the only example of a sovereign state on whose life a decent minimum of the reports so dear to the Trusteeship Council would be desirable.

The British Colonies, after all, are no bad model of a progressive attempt to further the effective co-operation of all the peoples and classes immediately concerned for the welfare and development of Africa. It is a positive advantage that the basis of co-operation is local—though, of course, the units and the international divisions are highly artificial and should be provisional only. It is impracticable here and now to speak of the divergent racial elements established for weal or woe as a component of some of the colonies. It is well to repeat that all responsible white settlers begin to understand that their future depends wholly on the quality of the work they do, the example they set, the leadership they earn for themselves. How far the Indians and Syrians have learned their place I cannot judge. In East Africa there is no doubt Indians have greatly fostered the internal trade, taken a part in establishing industries, supplied assistant doctors besides numbers of useful clerks in many walks of life, and a great body of *fundis* or artisans. They have not, so far, very much helped to impart their skill to their African fellows, and they remain Indians not yet fully integrated in this “plural” society. For them, as for the white settlers, it stands that there is room and work enough, indeed I think need, for all sorts in the making of Africa—provided only that all play their part by the African people, and that Africans on their side can bring themselves to “play” at all.

In the end you may ask where South Africa comes into all this. I wonder if I have been talking unilingually after all, in a strange language? It is possible I exaggerate the significance of the stir going on very nearly on your doorstep. The last generation has certainly seen startling social and economic changes, whether or not they seriously affect any but the local people, and political development (which is apt to catch the South African eye) cannot lag far behind. There is no final and satisfactory end in sight anywhere—no-one has “arrived”. But at any rate the thinking and talk are always forward-looking and the work in hand seeks the development and welfare of the entire population. In large part the job facing the Union is

similar. I wish I could feel confident that South Africa is not exhausting herself by swimming needlessly against the tide. As a pioneer worker in another field I may be allowed to remark that development seems to have removed the urgency of the so-called Poor White problem which gravely vexed many people here twenty or thirty years ago. I see no reason why this generation of Europeans, feeling more secure itself, should not now work a similar and wider revolution and get its other "question" solved or *opgelos*. I hope, indeed, it will not be at the cost of denuding all the land of its people by "industrialisation", so called. On a realist plane, you will notice that the general development of the tropical territories should greatly extend the market for Union goods; but that can only be at the price of robbing it of a much-valued reserve supply of labour. Common sense and stern necessity demand that South Africa now set itself to make adult, fully productive citizens of all its own people.

Obstacle of Distrust

I have reiterated that the greatest obstacle to further progress in the tropical territories is the fear and distrust taking root among African leaders; and that the restoration of confidence can only come if Africans there make it a two-way traffic and take their own share of responsibility for good human relations. The Union, greatest of African states, must play its part in removing grounds for suspicion. Its own African population includes proportionately as large a number of adult, civilized men and women as any of its neighbours, the Cape probably a larger proportion than any of them. Is it their fault if their outlook strikes one fresh from the newer colonies as negative and unconstructive, laying emphasis on grievances rather than on immediate tasks and ultimate ends? South Africa itself must answer that question and do its share in helping to keep the rest of Africa sane. A positive and constructive lead from the Union could do more than any other single influence to help its neighbours to concentrate on malaria and tsetse flies, water supplies and soil erosion, and above all to cease from putting politics before morals. On the higher technical levels the Union is already pooling its great resources of specialist knowledge and experience. The frequent meetings these days of agricultural, veterinary, scientific and medical officers, of labour and other departmental representatives, are of great value and obviously the proper first step. But I conclude that South Africa has much to learn about these neighbours as well as to teach them.

The time for wide general conferences and talks (I had almost said like this one!) is not yet—not till many more South Africans have done their part in making the Union thoroughly aware of how things are in the Africa beyond, and how they look from that angle. To this end I look for many more than now of the ardent, in the widest sense missionary-minded youth of South Africa to make their own African venture. They must realize the difficulties and earn their welcome. The South African background should give them a yardstick, but they must expect to learn as well as teach and, having learned, to take a hand in the education or the re-education of the Union itself. Volunteers of all sorts and classes are being asked for urgently by the Colonial Office—university-trained administrators; pure scientists and technicians of all and every kind; university and other teachers, a great many; Christian missionaries who must be as many-sided as they are zealous; statisticians, social workers, labour and trade union officers; and—I emphasize—there is a really grave shortage of doctors and nurses.

Practical help of this kind is actually budgeted for and still possible. But the sands are running out. Varying David Livingstone's famous Cambridge phrase of nearly a century ago—the door he opened may even now be shutting in our faces. Do you do your part to keep it open?

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