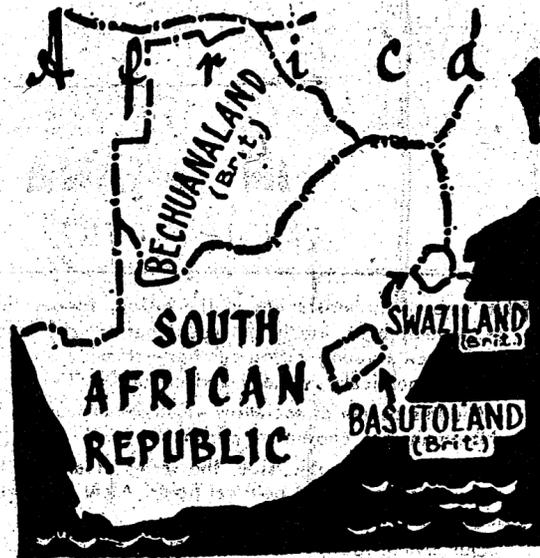


Freedom Fight Focus is on the Protectorates

by Brian Bunting



THE recent flight of South African prison escapees, Goldreich and Wolpe, the persecution of the Hodgsons, the kidnapping of Dr. Abrahams and his colleagues, the threats and imprecations of the South African Government—all these events and more have brought into sudden prominence the three Protectorates of Basutoland, Swaziland and Bechuanaland which constitute the High Commission Territories of southern Africa.

The three territories are at the moment administered by Britain through her Ambassador for South Africa, who is also High Commissioner for the Protectorates. In his former capacity, he is responsible to the Foreign Office; in the latter to the Colonial Office.

Before South Africa became a Republic, the territories fell within the purview of the Commonwealth Relations Office. The change-over to the present position took place in December 1961.

Although the three territories tend to be regarded as one political entity, their individual positions and level of development are very different.

PROTECTION

Basutoland came under British control in 1868. Chief Moshoeshe one of the greatest of African statesmen, applied to the British for protection from the encroachment of the Boers. The Basotho had had many encounters with the white man but had never been defeated in battle—a

fact which is proudly remembered to this day.

The Basotho insist they are not a conquered people or a subject race, but equal partners by treaty with the British. Any attempt at unilateral action by the British Government is deeply resented.

According to the 1956 census, Basutoland has a population of 639,000 Basotho and 1,926 White officials, missionaries or traders who may not own land in the territory. It is politically and educationally the most advanced of the three territories, with a literacy standard said to be as high as that for Western Europe.

Politically, it is administered in terms of a new constitution, introduced in 1939, which provides for the election of a legislative council of 80 members,

half of whom are elected by district councils which are themselves predominantly elected. The Executive Council consists of four senior officials (including the Resident Commissioner) and four members chosen by the legislative council, with the Resident Commissioner having both a deliberative and casting vote.

Basutoland is entirely surrounded by South Africa and economically dependent on it. There is not a single factory of any sort in the territory and if a man has no access to land and is unable to find work with a White man, he must seek work in the Republic. It is estimated that 150,000 Basotho work as migrant labourers in South Africa, which means that more than half the adult male Basotho workers are forced to seek work outside their homeland.

SWAZILAND

SWAZILAND, the smallest of the three territories, bordered by Mozambique and South Africa, was once administered by the Transvaal Republic, but came under British control after the Boer War. It has a population of 240,000 Swa-

zi, 9,000 Whites and 1,400 Coloureds.

Unlike Basutoland, land ownership by Whites is allowed, and nearly half of the territory is in fact owned by Whites. Economically, it is the wealthiest of the territories, with good farmland and afforestation, extensive sugar plantations, paper mill and the world's largest asbestos mine. Encouraged by the prospects, White investment is increasing apace.

Swaziland's new constitution, not yet in force, provides for an African majority with one third of the seats in the legislative council reserved for Whites. Not only the Whites but the African traditionalists resent this new constitution, while the younger and more modern nationalist element demands a still greater measure of self-government leading towards independence and one man one vote.

BECHUANALAND

BECHUANALAND, the largest of the territories, came under British control in 1896. It is bounded by South Africa, South West Africa, Southern Rhodesia,

and Northern Rhodesia, with the last named of which it is connected by a narrow strip of land between the Victoria Falls and the Caprivi Zifel. The population is about 300,000, of whom about 3,000 are Whites.

Large portions of Bechuanaland are desert or semi-desert, but the eastern portion has a good average rain-fall and is suitable for ranching, meat being one of the main exports to South Africa.

Whereas Bechuanaland and Swaziland are each inhabited by a separate tribe, Bechuanaland has separate reserves for its eight different tribes, the main one being the Bamangwato, whose leader Seretse Khama was exiled by the Labour Government when he dared to marry a White woman.

He has since been allowed to return to the territory, has founded the Bechuanaland Democratic Party in opposition to the more nationalistic Bechuanaland People's Party and is being spoken of as a possible first Prime Minister under the new constitution which is now being negotiated.

A feature of all three territories is their close connection with South Africa, which operates their posts and telegraphs, currency and banking and customs tariffs. When the Union of South Africa was inaugurated in 1910, it was always assumed that in due course the three Protectorates would become part of South Africa, and a schedule to the South Africa Act lays down the procedure which must be followed when this incorporation takes place. However, recent developments, and especially the retrogression of South Africa under the Nationalist regime, make incorporation more and more unlikely.

VERWOERD VIEW

The attitude of South African Government towards incorporation has also undergone a change. The Malan regime at first favoured transfer of the territories, and indeed, the Tomlinson Commission which lays down the blueprint for the development of "Bantustans" assumed that incorporation would take place.

But in the face of growing British and African opposition, the Verwoerd Government decided to face facts and formally renounced any desire to incorporate the territories.

The events of the last two years have changed all that. As repression inside South Africa increased, the flow of refugees to the territories increased. The Pan-Africanist Congress set up a headquarters in Basutoland from which its secretary, P.K. Leballo, announced in March of this year that he had an "army" of 150,000 men at his disposal which was to make an all-out attack on White

South Africa in 1963.

The fact that his premature announcement led to the incarceration of 5,000 of his followers in South Africa did not lessen the anxiety of the South African Government about the use to which the protectorates were being put.

In August, a senior Security Branch official, Col. H.J. van den Bergh, accused the British authorities of "wittingly in my opinion" allowing Bechuanaland in particular to be used as a refuge by "Communists and saboteurs" wanted in South Africa.

'BIG SQUEEZE'

To prevent the passage of these refugees and freedom fighters, the South African authorities began "Operation Big Squeeze" against the Protectorates. A policy of repatriating Protectorate Africans wherever possible was adopted.

Thirty-six border posts were established to facilitate police control and six-foot high fences were constructed on certain parts. Protectorate citizens were for the first time subjected to passport control, searches and even assaults at the borders, and the South African railways cut off their service at five days' notice to Maseru without explanation.

After the Goldreich-Wolpe escape, new control measures were introduced to make it impossible for planes carrying refugees to overfly South African territory.

Politically, South Africa's ambition to incorporate the Protectorates was revived. In a speech in Pretoria on September 3rd, Dr. Verwoerd offered to administer the Protectorates as "self-governing Bantustans".

Dr. Verwoerd's honeyed words evoked a certain response from frightened Whites in the three territories, but universal condemnation from the Africans.

In the Protectorates, poor as they are, Africans don't have to carry passes, are not subject to the draconic provisions of the Sabotage Act, the 90-day no-trial Act and all the other monstrous laws which disfigure the South African statute book. No African in his senses would exchange his part-freedom under British rule for the hell of apartheid.

SILENCE

The most disturbing feature of the whole situation has been the failure of the British authorities to place firm barriers in the way of the Verwoerd aggressors. The Verwoerd offering itself, instead of being rejected with contempt, was greeted with silence by the Colonial Office.

All refugees are placed under humiliating restrictions which forbid them to take any part in politics or even to write anything for the press—restrictions which are almost as severe

as those imposed on the opponents of apartheid by the Verwoerd Government.

In Basutoland, a proclamation was issued making it an offence for anybody to conspire against any other country or to do anything which might endanger Basutoland's relations with other countries—penalty, a fine of £500 or three years imprisonment. Similar restrictive legislation is being planned for the other territories.

Meanwhile the supporters of apartheid, including known police agents, are allowed to enter the Protectorates at will and carry out their vile policies without interference. They went too far with the kidnapping of Dr. Abrahams, and had to restore their captive, but on a lesser plane they conduct their activities openly and even with the connivance of the authorities.

PROBLEMS OF REFUGEES

The Verwoerd Government has made it plain it will not tolerate anti-Nationalist activities in the Protectorates, while the Nationalist press has called for the establishment of underground Nationalist groups to deal with the problem of the refugees.

To all this provocations, the British Government has offered no reply. Politically, it leans over backwards to avoid giving offence to South Africa—in which, incidentally, British capitalists have about £1,000 million very profitably invested. Economically, Britain has done nothing to make the Protectorates less dependent on their greedy neighbour.

In the twelve months ended March 1963, the three High Commission Territories were granted only a beggarly £280,558 by Britain, according to a report in the *Cape Times* on September 6th. Grants for Basutoland totalled £113,400, for Bechuanaland £104,453 and Swaziland £62,705.

At this level of spending, working out at less than 5s. per head of population, the Protectorates will never be free from the shackles of South African imperialism.

Not surprisingly in the present crisis the journal of the Basutoland Communist Party should declare: "We cannot rely on British Imperialism to protect Basutoland against the Republic. On the contrary, the British will do everything to protect the Republic from the forces of progress sweeping across Africa."

"The struggle of the Basotho for freedom is part of these forces... The Communist Party of Lesotho (Basutoland) uniting all revolutionary forces in the country will continue to work for immediate independence of our country which is the only way we can put a stop to the present drift."

Neo-Colonialism in Cameroon

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for instance, that the average individual total of African bank accounts in the Eastern Cameroon is just a little under 100,000 C.F.A. francs, whereas the bank accounts of Europeans and assimilated persons (sic) is in the region of 500,000 C.F.A. francs. This ratio of 5 (for the colonisers) as against 1 (for the local bourgeoisie) by itself, and without any examination of the other factors not revealed by the figures, gives a fairly accurate scale of the economic plan and the balance of forces, so far as the neo-colonialists are concerned.

Another figure which is equally revealing, also published in the same Bulletin, informs us that for the month of October 1962 alone, almost 2,000,000 C.F.A. francs were transferred by the Central Bank to foreign countries, in most cases to France. This means that the pseudo-independence granted to the Cameroon has not in any way changed the essential feature of the colonial period, namely, the accumulation of enormous profits on the spot, only to have them sent abroad to the "Mother-Country".

HIGHER PROFITS

But although the statistics of banking accounts

quoted above indicate clearly that the neo-colonialist ruling clique only manage to collect the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table of super profits, it must also be noted that since 1960, the general tendency has shown a definite increase in the assets of Africans. The fact that between 1960 and 1962, African depositors have increased from 10,103 to 13,404 and their average bank account rates from 77,000 C.F.A. francs to 94,000, simply indicates that, broadly speaking, that is the proportion in which the small fringe of the Camerounian society interested in pursuing a neo-colonialist policy has increased. Of course, there are no statistics to indicate the amount of assets held by Cameroon leaders abroad for the time being, but in any case, from the known facts we are entitled to draw a conclusion which is clear. It is this: not only do the neo-colonialists distribute only the crumbs to their collaborators, but these privileged collaborators compared with the mass of the Kamerun people represent only a handful of some thousands of businessmen.

In order to keep themselves going, these businessmen are prepared to go to

any lengths. Cede military bases to France, accord her in advance the right of passage for her troops (in case they would like to go to other countries in Equatorial Africa to practise repression), to go and solicit funds from the European Common Market Fund) and it is not for nothing that last July, Yaoundé was chosen as the place for signing the New Convention of Association with the Common Market, as well as from Washington, promulgate and carry out in practice fascist laws, all this is in line with the logic of neo-colonialism, and it is also a requirement of that logic that the war should continue.

AFRICAN PATRIOTS

This logic cannot possibly be that of the African Revolution. The fact that the Kamerun which is a martyred and in fact the most perfect example of the tragic consequences of neo-colonialism, makes every African patriot feel directly concerned by what is happening there. These African patriots cannot but feel a sense of solidarity with the heroic fighters of the Kamerun Army of Liberation and the UPC which directs its movements. This is so, because the resolutely carrying on the struggle, by prosecuting

it against all odds, the Kamerunian combatants are forging a way not only for the liberation of their country, but also for the victory which will be won over the forces of Western neo-colonialism.

That is why they have every right to ask, as in the case of the UPC memorandum dated the 23rd August, that the active unity of Independent Africa should come to their assistance, and should in fact express itself concretely in a very definite manner. Here there would be no point in sheltering behind the argument of insufficient means. Africa is not destitute and disarmed in the face of the Ahidjo-Pechiney tyranny. All she needs is the will to organise and unite in the struggle that exists. And here it should be noted that the Africans who collaborate with the neo-colonialists are particularly strengthened by any hesitancy on the part of African States, and quite frightened whenever there is the least sign of opposition, whenever a maquis appears.

In any case, the popular forces will finally win the day. Nevertheless, Africa must do something to hasten victory and lessen the suffering of the people of the Kamerun.