

IMPERIALIST STRATEGY IN AFRICA

by Idris Cox

DURING the past decade the advance of the liberation struggle throughout Africa has confronted imperialism with new and serious problems. This applies especially to those imperialist powers with direct possession of colonies in the African continent.

The decision of the Addis Ababa Conference of African Heads of State to organise concerted action (including armed struggle) to free the remaining colonies, presents them with an even more serious challenge.

In some respect this new situation alarms United States imperialism more than the direct colony-owning powers.

British imperialism has been forced to recognise that it cannot hold on indefinitely to its remaining colonies, but is still striving to maintain its grip by the strategy of neo-colonialism.

This applies also to French imperialism, and its sole remaining direct colony, French Somaliland, is now looking forward to political independence—with the solidarity aid of the African liberation movement.

The Portuguese imperialist rulers still hope to keep their hold on Angola, Mozambique and other small African colonial territories; the Spanish rulers hope to keep their small African outpost; and the apartheid rulers in South Africa (together with the white settlers in Southern Rhodesia) will fight to the bitter end to prevent the liberation of the African peoples.

The colony-owning powers exercise strong economic and political influence even after political independence in their own specific regions.

BUT UNITED STATES IMPERIALISM, WHOSE ONLY DIRECT COLONY WAS LIBERIA, SEEKS TO EXTEND ITS GRIP THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT.

DURING THE PAST TEN YEARS IT HAS CONCENTRATED ITS FORCES TO "FILL THE VACUUM CREATED BY THE WEAKENED POSITION OF OTHER IMPERIALIST POWERS IN AFRICA.

Indeed, the victories of political independence since 1957 (abolishing direct colonial rule), have enabled the United States to penetrate new regions of Africa from which it was to a great extent barred when constitutional power was in the hands of Britain and France.

These developments that have created a situation in which the United States is in a stronger position to exercise economic, political, and ideological influence in Africa than any other imperialist power.

On the other hand, the African liberation movements have advanced, so rapidly and their anti-imperialist outlook has become so pronounced, that the United States is forced to twist and turn in its strategy and tactics year after year.

What is even more disturbing for U.S. imperialism is the impact of the growing socialist world in Africa.

This arises not only from the increasing ability to extend genuine socialist aid, but from the great economic and technical advances in the socialist countries which make this possible.

Above all, the consistent fight of the socialist countries within the United Nations for world peace and for the abolition of all forms of colonialism, gives a practical demonstration to the millions of African who are their real allies.

This is a situation which forces United States ruling circles to constantly re-examine their strategy and tactics in relation to Africa as a whole.

The most recent comprehensive expression of their "new thinking" on this problem is a new book by

Mr. Vernon MacKay "Africa in World Politics" published in 1963.

With typical American brazenness the publishers describe the book as the "first comprehensive analysis of Africa's multiplying contacts with Europe, Asia and the America's."

It does certainly touch upon Africa's relations with the rest of the world, its growing impact within the United Nations and the alleged Soviet "aims" in Africa, but its main essence is the importance of Africa for United States imperialism. The preface "modestly" admits that:

"American pressure on African events has been exerted in many ways—through diplomatic persuasion in Europe, through our votes on African issues in the United Nations even when we abstained, through the "Voice of America" and other propaganda media, through the educational exchange programmes of the State Department and other agencies, both public and private, and through economic and technical assistance to Africa."

The author expresses serious concern at the big changes in the United Nations arising from the increasing number of independent States which have become members.

Though United States personnel are in key position in the U.N. administrative machine, in the General Assembly itself the imperialist powers are often defeated on colonial issue;

"It is quite clear that sharp conflicts over colonial and racial issues have broken down the spirit of co-operation and weakened the United Nations at least in the short run."

Faced with this new situation the need for a more flexible United States policy in U.N.O. is advocated—many would describe it as a deceitful policy.

"In the United Nations African and Asian members are now so numerous that it is even more important for the United States to avoid being stereotyped as a supporter of colonialism. A bela-

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ted jump to the front of the anti-colonialism bandwagon would be some what hypocritical and of little lasting value. An independent posture, keeping the door to both groups open, may still prove valuable in the difficult period ahead."

The actual record shows however, that the United States speeches and votes in U.N.O (while occasionally making gestures on South Africa and Portugal to weaken its rivals), have always favoured some form of imperialist domination in Africa. In a revealing chapter "Soviet Policy in Africa" the author explains that in the Trusteeship Council the "standard technique" of the Soviet delegates in the fifteen years after the second world war was to press for:

1. Participation of the people in the government.
2. Replacing the tribal system with democratic government.
3. Return of alienated land.
4. Replacing the head tax with an income tax.
5. Increasing the budget for education, cultural and health purpose.

The author testifies that in the "early years" these "were voted down one by one". All this helped to "build up the image of the Soviet Union as a friend who always fought for colonial peoples."

In contrast, "the negative votes and abstentions of the United States "built up an opposite image of a defender of the colonial powers if not of colonialism."

Before the African and Asian States had reached a strong position of influence in the NATO the United States supported the colonial powers and was not obliged to resort to subtle methods.

This book boasts about Soviet representative for many years being kept off from visiting missions, to trust territories in Africa, or from serving on Petition Committee and of all kinds of obstruction to Soviet opposition to all forms of colonialism.

At the 15th General Assembly a Soviet proposal for "complete independence forthwith" and the elimination of all strongholds of colonia-

lism was rejected, but a new motion put forward by 43 Afro-Asian members was substituted (supported by the Soviet Union) which retained the basic demand for "the abolition of colonialism".

This was adopted by 89 votes to nil and 9 abstentions. Among those abstaining were the United States, Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, South Africa Australia and Dominica.

The author bemoans the fact that the United States has a "bad press" on this and many other issues in the United Nations.

He consoles himself that with so many colonies achieving their independence, there will be less "opportunities" for the Soviet Union to "exploit" the situation. But he recognises that a several "thorny problems" remain, notably the Portuguese colonies, and South Africa.

A valiant attempt is made to praise the "economic aid" which the United Nations has extended to Africa from its "Special Fund", from 1959 to 1962.

It does not explain that this is restricted to projects which provide basic cheap services for the overseas monopoly firms in the form of roads, bridges, ports and harbours etc, which in themselves yield little or no profit.

Even so, Africa was allocated only \$42 million in three years—one-sixth of a dollar per head of the population!

Even more ludicrous is the glossy picture painted of loans to Africa from the World Bank.

A total of 41 loans for 16 African countries (at high rates of interest up to February 1962 to \$929 million.

WHEN THIS IS BROKEN DOWN IT IS REVEALED THAT 6478 MILLION WENT TO SOUTH AFRICA, CONGO AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN FEDERATION (WHICH HAS NOW BEEN DISSOLVED).

This is in contrast not only \$50 million to Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda (less than half of one per cent!) which together have a bigger population.

However, it is fully recognised that United Nations "economic aid" or even the World Bank occupies

only a minor role in relation to loans and grants to Africa.

More than 90 per cent of economic aid" to Africa consists of bilateral grants and loans.

Because of its special relationship with its ex-colonies France has the biggest total, and in 1960 extended loans and grants amounting to \$732 million, while the United States amount was \$231 million and Britain's only \$144 million.

This is by no means the whole story. The United States has several "channels" for the penetration of the African countries. In his anxiety to prove to American readers what "tremendous efforts" are being made to "assist Africa, the author gives a fairly comprehensive list of these "channels." What are they?

First, there are the "private" United States organisations active in Africa.

They comprise 223 business firms, 203 missionary agencies and 173 other educational, philanthropic and civil agencies.

They are all listed in a State Department report entitled "International, Educational, Cultural and Related Activities for African Countries South of the Sahara", published in August 1961.

It is explained that their activities influence African opinion as well as "policy makers" in Washington, and that some of them openly attempt to bring pressure on governments while others deny any attempt to influence policy.

The business firms find Africa extremely profitable, and US investments increased from \$298 million in 1950 to \$925 million in 1960.

Among the missionary societies 60 are Catholic, 39 are Protestant, and 54 are inter-denominational.

South of the Sahara there were in 1962 more than 3,500 missionary "workers", and in 1957 it was claimed that 37 million Africans has been converted to Catholicism and 27 million to the Protestant religion.

Among the "civic" organisations there are councils, associations and clubs, which include the African-American Institute, the African

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Studies Association, the American Society of African Culture, the American Committee on Africa, the Africa League, the African Research Foundation, the African Service Institute, the African-American Students Foundation, and the Foundation for all Africa.

Truly a formidable list!

These "civic" groups are not so private as they seem.

They are assisted by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Foreign Policy Association to organise meetings and publish journals, and extend their operations to the formation of branches in various parts of Africa.

Then there are 11,000 "private foundations" or philanthropic organisations (apart from 50,000 other tax exempt organisations), which are active in this field.

The Carnegie programme for Africa for 1959-60 totalled projects to value of \$1,189,500 and Rockefeller \$1,152,600.

The Ford Foundation did not begin operations until 1951, but for "training and research" has now advanced \$9,000,000 and of its \$40 million grants to America universities for 1960-62, one-tenth was allocated for African studies.

In 1960 alone, American universities had no less than 76 different programmes on various aspects of African problems.

One must not forget either the activities of the A.F.L. and CIA and the ICFTU regional organisations in Africa for which money has been poured out in recent years, especially to resist the growth of the All-African Trade Union Federation formed in 1961.

After a brief review of various interpretations of America's "national interest" in Africa, the author comes to the conclusion that:

"It is most of all a political interest in having the proper balance of freedom and stability in Africa," and then proceeds to examine this from three aspects: (a) military (b) economic, and (c) political.

With the growing African opposition to military bases, the new technique of nuclear war and the

impact of the socialist world, it is argued that "Africa in 1962 contained fewer Western military assets than Europeans had hoped for".

At the same time the United States cannot ignore the new discoveries of mineral deposits in Africa useful for war purposes, or its growing need for raw materials which may increase its dependence on African resources.

THE ECONOMIC ASPECT IS LINKED WITH THE MILITARY ASPECT, AND THE EXPLOITATION OF AFRICA'S OIL, IRON ORE, BAUXITE AND OTHER RESOURCES IS EMPHASISED AS BEING ESSENTIAL FOR THE UNITED STATES.

FOR THIS REASON U.S. GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ARE TAKING AN INCREASING SHARE IN PROCURING THESE RESOURCES IN THE "NATIONAL INTEREST".

It also underlines the decisive importance of the Common Market as a means for the "restoration of a sound European economic and in the interests of furthering the aspirations of African peoples."

In other words, to maintain Africa as a reserve to produce minerals and raw materials for the imperialist countries!

From the political standpoint the author asserts that if "democracy is to flourish in the United States, free institutions must also continue to exist in other fortunate parts of the world".

AMERICA'S ALLIES

He lumps together "the dictatorship of Khrushchev, Hitler, Franco, Mussolini and Salazar".

Hitler and Mussolini are gone, so it is safe to condemn them!

But no word of condemnation for the fascist Verwoerd in South Africa, Chiang Kai Shek, of the American "pillars of democracy" which have been set up in South Korea, Thailand, Iraq and many parts of Latin America.

Certainly nothing about democratic rights for American Negroes!

The author declares: "It is in our national interest for Africa to remain free of Communist dictatorship", which means in practice that Africa should refuse to have friendly

relations with the socialist countries.

To prevent this development, it seems to be in America's "national interest" to support one-party systems, two-party systems—anything, providing it does not mean the advancement of socialist ideas in Africa!

To protect its "national interest" in Africa and elsewhere in the world, the United States is obliged to build up a huge administrative machine.

STATE DEPARTMENT

In the chapter "The Making of African Policy," this book explains this as the main reason for increasing the personnel of the U.S. Department of State from 4,726 in 1930 with a budget of \$15 million to a budget of \$331 million in 1960 and since then it has risen far more.

The author is himself a Professor of African Studies, a Director of Programmes for African Studies, Chairman of the State Department's Advisory Council on African Affairs, and an extensive traveller over Africa.

A new development in July 1958, was the formation of a "Bureau of African Affairs" under an Assistant Secretary of State, and an increase of full-time officers from 44 in 1960 to 97 in 1962.

This is now the main "power-house" for United States operations in Africa, where the number of U.S. Foreign Service officers" has increased from 664 in 1957 to 1,359 in July 1961. The U.S. "Bureau of African Affairs" is the main political channel, but there are many more which enable the United States to penetrate into Africa.

The Agency for International Development has no less than 1,310 U.S. representatives in Africa.

The so-called "Peace Corps" has reached nearly 10,000. The United States Information Agency (USIA) has 133 officers and 476 trained propagandists in Africa in 1962 at 43 U.S. "Information centres" in 31 African cities.

Through various channels too numerous to mention, the United States uses films, books, television and radio relay stations, and buys up African newspapers to influence Africans in the United States itself

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They all dovetail into comprehensive strategic plan for the advancement of America's "national interest" in Africa, and the author quotes with approval a recent new book on American Foreign Policy, which declares:

"...foreign aid is wholly inseparable from politics and is always an economic instrument of foreign policy". (The New Statecraft—Foreign Aid in American Foreign Policy, by George Liska).

Despite this vast apparatus in the service of America's aims in Africa, the author is by no means confident, that its operations are successful, because racial discrimination against Africans in the United States itself is difficult to explain away—and in contrast to the absence of racial discrimination in the Soviet Union.

"At the height of the controversy over the colonial question it was extremely difficult to make palatable propaganda out of U.S. fence-sitting in the United Nations. The racial discrimination to which American Negroes are still subjected is even harder to explain to Africans. Since the Soviet Union in contrast, has escaped identification with racialism and colonialism, American propaganda about Soviet 'colonialism' and the threat of communism in Africa has little effect, and in fact is often regarded by Africans as deceptive counter-propaganda to conceal American support for Western colonialism".

It certainly seems as if all the money spent on American activity and propaganda in Africa is not reaping a rich reward.

After the Addis Ababa Conference of African Heads of State in

May, 1963, it is even more difficult to do so.

United States ties with fascist circles in South Africa and Portugal will reach breaking point when the Addis Ababa decisions are translated into practice.

The author closes his book with the warning that "We must attune ourselves to this revolutionary spirit in Africa," and declares:

"If we fail in the effort, we may find our present system of international security collapsing all round us within the next decade".

What the author really means is that the United States will no longer be able to exercise domination over the African continent.

AND WITH THIS CONCLUSION ONE CAN ONLY EXPRESS THE FULLEST AGREEMENT.

(Culled from Pan-African)