

Apartheid Expansionism

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The nature of apartheid as a system of oppression and exploitation of African people in South Africa is notorious enough. But

recently, it has become clear that the Republic of South Africa has embarked on a complex and many-sided offensive against the liberation movements and the independent African states. The policy of South Africa has been a carrot and stick policy.

On the one hand, South Africa has absurdly presented itself as an altruistic state interested only in developing friendship with African independent states with the intention of promoting trade and technical aid. Despite all the inherent absurdities of a policy of oppressing Africans at home while making friendship with them across borders and abroad, white South Africa is pursuing its aims skillfully and relentlessly. The strategic object of this aspect of South African government policy is to create a series of client states which will provide a base directed against the liberation movements and the independent states of Africa. So that in fact the aid and trade ultimately have military and strategic aims in view . . .

The above excerpt is from a joint statement by the following supreme leaders of the fighting liberation movements of Southern Africa and Guinea-Bissau; Amílcar Cabral of PAIGC (Guinea-Bissau), Agostino Neto of MPLA (Angola), James Chikerema of ZAPU (Zimbabwe), the late Eduardo Mondlane of FRELIMO (Mozambique), Sam Nujoma of SWAPO (Namibia) and Oliver Tambo of ANC (South Africa). The statement was presented by Mr. Tambo to the Fifth Assembly of the Heads of States and Governments of the OAU in Algiers, September 1968.

The facts outlined in the excerpt are of central importance in understanding South Africa's current moves to extend her margin of manoeuvres for regional hegemony. Through a host of intriguing schemes, Pretoria has managed to woo Banda's Malawi into the white-dominated zone whose northern buffer Malawi now provides.

In March 1967, Malawi ministers were flown to Pretoria. They were dined, wined, and accommodated in Pretoria's all-white hotel. Subsequently, a trade agreement was concluded between Malawi and the apartheid Republic. By the terms of this agreement, South Africa agreed to permit Malawi to export 500,000 pounds of tea to South Africa, duty free. Malawi in return, granted South Africa preferential tariffs for all South African goods imported into Malawi. In June 1967, South Africa announced the plan to build a 'diplomatic village', a special location a distance away from Pretoria, to house the 'kaffir' diplomats from Malawi who could not live in the usual Corps Diplomatique area of Cape Town because of residential apartheid practised in South Africa. In September of that year, diplomatic relations were officially established between Malawi and South Africa at the charge d'affaires level. By the end of that year, the South African Import-Export Corporation had obtained a contract to build a new capital for Malawi at Lilongwe in Central Malawi. Subsequently, this corporation formed a joint company with the Malawi Development Corporation. Banda first sought British help regarding the idea of building a new capital. The British, however,

declined to help with the scheme after an economic mission reported that it was wasteful and unproductive in terms of the capital expenditure involved. Banda then turned to South Africa. In 1967, a team of South African physical planning specialists, headed by L.S. Rautenbach, one of Vorster's top rational strategists, completed a report in which they hailed the plan as the most important aspect of Malawi's development planning. Why South Africa was so readily receptive to the scheme deserves closer examination. Lilongwe, which is situated in Central Malawi, is in flat country which is well suited for the construction of an airport. Some observers of Southern Africa believe that the South African Airways, which is barred from using the East African Coast air route to Europe, could benefit from an airport at Lilongwe. These observers think that, for the South African airlines, such an East Coast air route would be both cheaper and quicker to Europe than the Angola-Canary Islands route now used by the South African Airways.

From a logistic point of view, Malawi will become an important staging ground for aggressive military moves against the fighting liberation movements in Southern Africa, as well as for military threats against the neighbouring countries which are supporting those liberation movements. Pro-fascist Banda will readily guarantee South Africa such a right. Furthermore, the South African fascists are aware that Malawi's integration into the South African trade network will make things harder for even a progressive government in Malawi after Banda. Experience has shown in Africa how hard it has been for the newly independent nations to break economic ties with their former colonial masters because the colonial economic set-ups were so neatly anchored to the economies of 'mother countries'. By 1968, Malawi had drifted deeply into the zone of white domination.

The dependence of the former High Commission territories is obvious and somehow understandable. Botswana, for instance, depends to a large extent on the 394 miles of the Cape Town to Rhodesia line. About two-thirds of Botswana's imports come from the Republic. Most of Botswana's meat, her main product, goes to South Africa. Both Botswana and Lesotho's road networks are embedded in the mass of South Africa. Malawi's situation regarding the apartheid Republic is not comparable. Britain takes nearly one-half of Malawi's exports and supplies one-third of her imports. Like the former British High Commission territories, the labour market constitutes Malawi's important link with South Africa. The picture is generally drawn, in an exaggerated fashion, that these countries are helpless before their economically powerful neighbour, South Africa. But a common policy between Malawi and the former High Commission territories could be an important bargaining card with South Africa. A well-coordinated policy could enable Malawi and the former High Commission territories to compel South Africa to at least improve the conditions of workers and increase their wages. This could equally reveal the fact that economic cards are not so one-sidedly stacked, as it is usually made to appear. The South African economy requires a constant flow of labour supply from these countries. Any tactical halt on this supply would be economically unbearable to South

Africa.

The docility of these countries is a remarkable gain, so far, in the South African strategy of regional domination. Today these countries, especially Malawi and Lesotho, are giving active diplomatic support to South Africa. When the Afro-Asian delegates made an attempt at the U.N. early this year to suspend South Africa from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development because of her racist policy of apartheid, it was these client states' delegates who were lobbying against the Afro-Asian attempt. The client states have also gone on record to condemn 'terrorism' – the South African label for the freedom fighters. They echo Pretoria's trite propaganda of 'good neighbourliness' among all the states of Southern Africa.

The two most important weapons of apartheid expansionism are 'sticks and carrots,' i.e. threats and bribery. They are being used at home and across the borders with the same vigour and intensity. In South Africa proper, as well as in the occupied territory of Namibia, most of all the able and progressive spokesmen of the African populations are either in prisons or forced underground or into exile.

South Africa is now carving up the territory of Namibia into 'Bantu nations' and an economically dominant white nation, over which South Africa will have total political control. The resulting political arrangement would effectively place the richest portion of Namibia under the direct administration of South Africa and leave the 'Bantu nations' as puppet enclaves, economically dependent on the 'mother country'. Domestically, the frustrated traditionalists, who view the rise of African Nationalists and their liberation movements as a threat to their 'power', are the ones in which South Africa finds its staunchest allies. The political leadership of the newly created 'Bantu nations' is drawn from these traditionalists who are usually outspoken in their embrace of 'separate development' as well as in their opposition to progressive African Nationalism.

There are instances where South Africa has managed a successful flirtation with disgruntled opposition leaders abroad. Nkumbula of Zambia is one such opposition leader whose political fortunes have long been sagging. It has recently been established that South African and Rhodesian money has found its way into Nkumbula's campaign funds during the election of December 1968, in Zambia. On the other hand, Kenneth Kaunda and his UNIP government have been the constant targets of South Africa's vituperation, threats and intimidation; that being the other factor in the 'carrots and sticks' policy already mentioned.