

MALAWI: Neocolonial State

Official name: Republic of Malawi
Area: 119 310 km²
Population: 4 130 000 inhabitants
Density per km²: 34
Capital: Lilongwe
Official language: English
Religion: Animists: 50%
 Catholics: 700 000
 Muslims: 500 000
Date of independence: July 6, 1964
Agricultural production: corn, yucca
Mineral production: bauxite, copper
Annual per capita income: 46 dollars
Infant mortality: statistics unknown
Doctors: one per 35 000 inhabitants
Rural population: 80%
Illiteracy: 85-90%

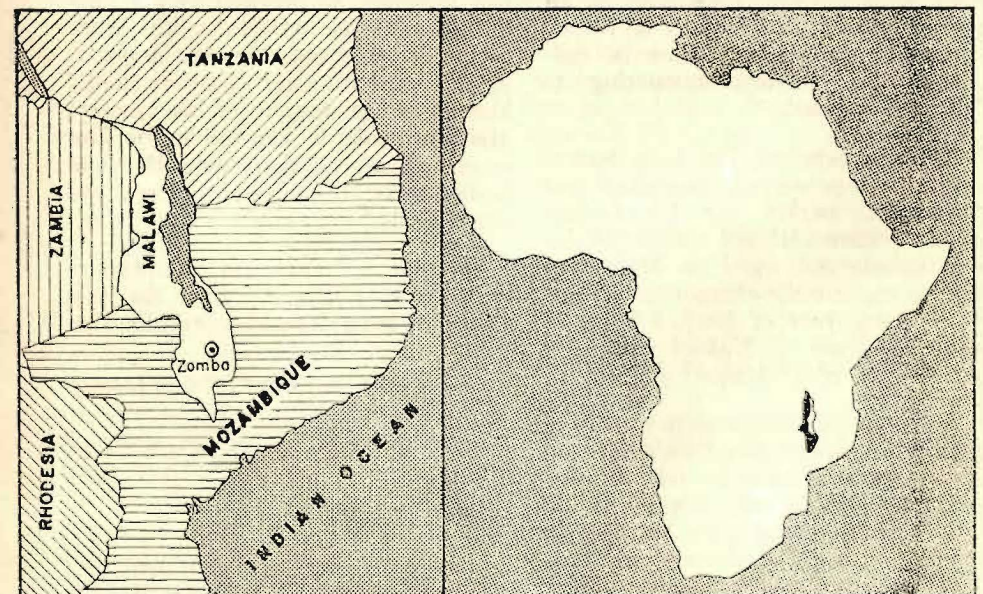
IT is now six years since a former tiny British colony in East Central Africa achieved independence under the new name of Malawi. The Malawi people, like all other peoples of Africa, fought colonialism in order to achieve nationhood and run their own economic, social and political affairs, aspirations of all people.

The Malawi Congress Party, the only political party in the country, won the first general election with an overwhelming majority, and formed the government under its leader, Dr. H. K. Banda. The African people throughout the continent and all progressive peoples of the world were happy to see an independent Malawi very close to the racist and colonial regimes of South Africa, Rhodesia, and the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and

Angola. Everybody thought that the establishment of an independent progressive African state in Malawi would provide the fighting bases for the liberation movements of South Africa, Rhodesia and Mozambique. These regimes could have been counting their days.

Economic Ties

The economic ties between Malawi and the racist regimes in the South were created by British colonialism which kept Malawi (then Nyasaland) as a source of cheap labor for their mining industries in South Africa and Rhodesia while Mozambique was kept for the railway agreements — Trans-Zambezi Railways and Nyasaland Railways. The economic relationship

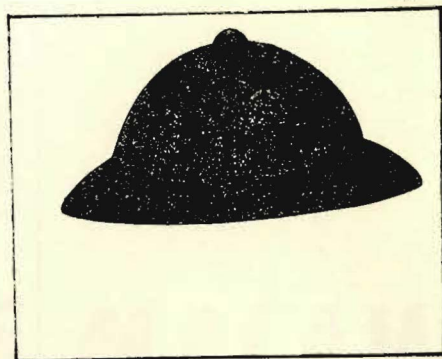


with Rhodesia was closer, especially when the two countries became the partner states of the defunct Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. When Malawi achieved independence in 1964, the government continued to forge and strengthen not only the economic relationship but also cultural links with the racists. The domination of the Malawi economy by Rhodesia during the ten years' existence of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland still continues and has now been strengthened. In the year 1965 for example: Malawi imported goods from Rhodesia, valued at £4 399 000 when exports from Malawi to Rhodesia were only £1 125 000. The imports consisted only of luxury goods, etc.¹

The British newspapers had to reveal that Dr. Banda, the Malawi President, provided duty-free entry to all goods produced in Rhodesia on conditions that the racist regime in Salisbury offer money, amounting to £800 000 annually.²

Malawi, therefore, has been turned into a well-preserved, protected and guaranteed market for Rhodesian foods. Commercial and trading circles in Rhodesia converged on Malawi at once to capture the cheap market, and in the same year of 1965, Rhodesian goods imported by Malawi reached a record 40% of all Malawi imports.³

As far as the relationship with Portugal is concerned, Dr. Banda was the first African leader to pay a visit to Portugal in the early 1960s. While in Lisbon he signed several economic, political, cultural and even military pacts with the former Portuguese dic-



tator, Dr. Antonio Salazar. Addressing the second summit of the Organization of African Unity in Cairo, in late July 1964, Banda refused to support a resolution calling for stronger sanctions against the white-dominated areas of Southern Africa. He insisted that although he believed in the total liberation of the African continent... he could not accept the resolution... He repeated his song that the colonial history and geography of his country, Malawi, made it impossible for him to cut off all relations with Portugal in diplomatic, commercial, cultural and other fields.⁴

Since then Malawi has continued to trade with Portugal. And the two countries have diplomatic relations on

¹ *Africa Diary*, New Delhi, India, January 24-30, 1966, p. 2704.

² *Financial Times*, London, November 18, 1965, p. 9.

³ *Ibid.*, December 10, 1965, p. 9.

⁴ As related by Dr. Banda, Malawi Parliament proceedings, September 8, 1964.

the consulate level. The Malawi representative in Lourenço Marques is a Portuguese known to be a close relative of Salazar. The Portuguese fascists pour into Malawi as businessmen, tourists and in other roles. They come to detect the activities of FRELIMO. The two countries have an agreement of territorial exchange, whereby Portuguese soldiers are allowed to carry out military activities in Malawi, while Malawi uses the outlet to the sea. Several times freedom fighters in Mozambique have been captured by Banda security forces and then sent to Mozambique where they are executed by the Portuguese fascists.

The relationship of Malawi with South Africa had been mainly on the basis of labor immigration. Britain, as a colonial power in Malawi and at the same time as the owner of the functioning capital in the Republic of South Africa, deliberately made Malawi a source of cheap labor for its mines and factories in the South. As early as 1903 the Witwatersrand gold mines of South Africa entered into an agree-

ment with the then colonial government in Nyasaland, for the recruitment of Malawi Africans. And in the next ten years a total of more than 9000 laborers were recruited, while considerable numbers of Africans travelled under great difficulties to seek independent employment in the Republic of South Africa. Malawi people who had no jobs in their own country immigrated to South Africa, Rhodesia, Zambia and also Tanzania, Mozambique and the Congo. The immigration to Rhodesia and to South Africa was in two categories:

- 1) those who went on contracts arranged by the government, as export commodities;
- 2) those who went on their own — to seek independent work.

The two categories differ in numbers in both Rhodesia and South Africa. In Rhodesia fewer go on contract than on noncontract, while in South Africa, those contracted greatly surpass the noncontracted. The table below gives the figures from 1956-65.

Country	Years		
	1956	1960	1965
Rhodesia:			
Contract	11 057	6 762	3 935
Noncontract	39 701	29 662	17 903
South Africa:			
Contract	13 980	25 981	39 023
Noncontract	1 536	2 630	291

Source: *Compendium of Statistics, 1965*, Malawi Government, p. 8.

The immigrant labor system in Malawi has its own peculiar characteristics. Laborers are recruited for specified periods of contract, normally two years. These are purely manual laborers with no trade skills. They leave their families in Malawi.

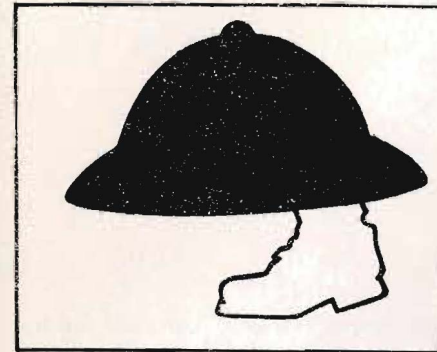
South Africa and Rhodesia enjoy two advantages, political and economic, as a result of Malawi labor immigration to these countries.

Political Advantages

1) The Malawi labor immigrants into the mines of South Africa hinder

the patriots of South Africa from forming themselves into a powerfully organized proletariat class, capable of using labor grievances and strikes as weapons for a call to armed revolution against apartheid. The racists use the immigrants as an instrument to neutralize the working class.

2) The additional political advantage to contract labor is that the immigrants live in camps, their period is limited, they are not allowed to go on strike or participate in local political affairs. It is not coincidental that in 1919, Malawi-born Clement Ka-



dalie, formed and led one of the most powerful trade union movements in the world, the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union. It proved to be the first forward-looking movement to appeal to the masses in South Africa. Richard Gray writes: "Combining political agitation with industrial activities, it paralleled the rapid impact of Garvey's movement."⁵

Economic Advantages

1) When laborers from a low-paid country like Malawi go to Rhodesia and South Africa, they accept wages which are below minimum, as long as they are above their Malawi minimum wage. They are superexploited by the capitalists of these countries.

2) The importation by South Africa and Rhodesia of ready-made workers amounts to a saving by these countries. Since these workers have been cared for by the Malawi Government, South Africa and Rhodesia have not spent anything on their upbringing. Since the workers go on contract, South Africa and Rhodesia will not have to pay for their old age. These workers come back home to Malawi already

worn out, increasing the burden on the social problems of Malawi.

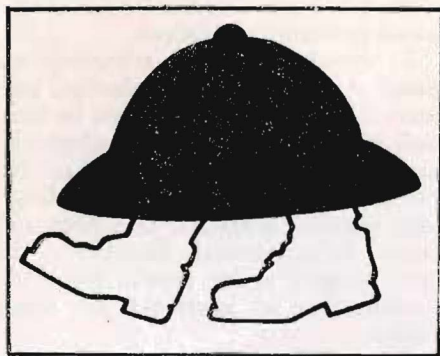
3) Another economic advantage for South Africa is that the laborers, who leave their wives and children in Malawi, are an additional and substantial saving on the social capital of the South African monopolists (on housing, schools, hospitals, transport and other infrastructural facilities). In fact, Malawi under Banda helps the continuation of apartheid in South Africa.

There is now in Malawi a labor statistics unit — the first of its kind in all Africa — that has been set up in Blantyre, Malawi. It is a three-year project in which the United Nations Development Programs and the Malawi Government are investing £104 166 and £62 500, respectively.⁶ The project aims at dealing with Malawi's migrant workers, their earnings and savings, period of repatriation from that country and the skills used there. The project will also conduct a labor survey in Malawi and obtain information on its present supply according to various skills. It will then make projections of the expected labor force in ten to fifteen years time and assist in the administration of migrant labor schemes.

There are arguments that the Malawi Government gains the foreign exchange earnings by way of remittances from migrant workers back to their families in Malawi. It is estimated that Malawi workers in South

⁵ *The Two Nations* by Richard Gray, London, 1960, p. 11.

⁶ *The Nationalist*, Tanzania, February 26, 1969.



Africa alone are about 80 000, and that during the past three years the migrant sector as a whole contributed to about £ 2.5 million a year in foreign exchange earnings.⁷

In a country with underdevelopment, and an open door economic policy, the remittances are in fact nothing to the economy of the country. When a migrant worker sends home the money, his family buys in Indian-owned stores the commodities manufactured in South Africa and Rhodesia. So, in fact, the money goes back to Pretoria and Salisbury. This policy cannot work in Malawi when capitalism is an official government policy.

To give an example, in 1957 the total remittances sent home by some 150 000 migrant workers were £ 1 500-000. Even if one discounts the £250 000 poll tax annual increase introduced since Federation, and ignores the increased cost of living, the additional revenue from labor migration means for the average migrant breadwinner's family an increase from three farthings a day to a little over 1 1/2 penny.⁸

Neocolonial Economy

The regime of Dr. Banda in Malawi is revealing itself more and more as an abettor of South African racialists who are striving to extend their influence in free Africa, at the same time that the country's economy has been dominated by South Africa. Pretoria now dictates its will and conditions to the ruling elite of Malawi. Banda himself says openly that he has three mother countries: Malawi, Britain and America. These imperialist countries including South Africa help him to build capitalism in a poor Malawi.

The greatest prospective mineral wealth of Malawi is bauxite. Economically any government should have enlisted aid to erect an aluminum plant within the country. Banda and his South African masters have decided to build such a plant not in Malawi but in Richards Bay in South Africa. It will produce aluminum from Mal-

⁷ *Op. cit.*

⁸ *Africa: the Roots of Revolt* by Jack Woddis, London, 1960, p. 88.



awian bauxite. South African economists have already computed that beginning with July 1, 1971, the plant will be put into operation. And in the next ten years also, the South African Republic will have saved 150 000 000 rands which otherwise would have to be spent to buy aluminum abroad.

Racist Visitors

South Africa offers technical assistance to Malawi. There are several South Africans working in Malawi security branches, the police and military. The chief information officer in Malawi is a South African Boer, an immigrant to that country. South Africa's new policy as a neocolonial power is that of trying to improve relations with independent African states. This policy has been described as the building of "bridges rather than forts." This was revealed by the editorial in the South African *Financial Gazette* of May 10, 1968, which said: "We must build more bridges and less forts. The might of our armed forces is not enough to shield off hostilities still being built up against South Africa in some African states. We must build more bridges into Africa. In Malawi we have

virtually spanned a bridge into the heart of Africa."⁹

The aim of South Africa in Malawi has been achieved. There have been several contacts between the two countries of which the following are probably best known:

- 1) The agreement between Malawi and South Africa, that South Africa will finance part of the 70-mile rail link to Nacala.
- 2) The agreement to finance the moving of the Malawi capital from Zomba to Lilongwe to which South Africa will contribute about £25 million.
- 3) A visit to Malawi by the South African Foreign Minister Dr. Mulder and other government officials.
- 4) The visit to Malawi in May 1970, by the South African Prime Minister Mr. John Vorster and his inspection of the projects which South Africa is financing.

⁹ *Financial Gazette*, South Africa, May 10, 1968.