

African Journey

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AFRICAN JOURNEY

H.E. The Swiss Ambassador recounts impressions of his journey through Africa

Members and friends of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique turned up *en masse* to the meeting at the Swiss Hostel for Girls, Belsize Grove, on the evening of 17th January. The star turn of the evening was, of course, a talk to be given by Dr. Daeniker, our Ambassador in London. When, after an excellent supper, provided by the management of the Hostel, we entered the lecture room some of us had all but actually to fight to get into the room at all. Even the Guest of Honour found it difficult to get through the door. Mr. W. Renz, who was to occupy the chair, had had the foresight to enter before the rush had started. In a few words he welcomed guests and members and then relinquished his place to the Ambassador.

Dr. Daeniker opened his talk by saying that the trip he and Madame Daeniker had undertaken, and which took them through the African continent, was "as successful as one could possibly expect it to be". The natural beauty and the varying panorama, the "majestic glory of the wild animals in the game reserves", would, he thought, be attractive enough for anyone to plan such a journey. And who would not feel the appeal which the reading of books about Livingstone, Stanley and Gordon had made on one's mind. Within two or three days it was now possible to overcome the tremendous distances along which those explorers had to struggle for months.

The fact that the choice by the Swiss Federal Council, to represent Switzerland at the celebrations of Independence of Nigeria, fell on him, provided him with the opportunity to visit the Consulates and Colonies placed under the jurisdiction of the Swiss Embassy in London. It was of great advantage in the discharge of one's responsibilities to know the conditions and the way of life prevailing in these territories.

The itinerary of their journey was therefore fixed, continued the speaker. After the official visit to Nigeria they had flown to Johannesburg — from where they went to the Cape of Good Hope and also visited a gold-mine. After that they flew northwards with short stays in Southern and Northern Rhodesia, Zanzibar, Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda. Finally they sailed from Mombasa to Italy, thence home. He would wish to mention, Dr. Daeniker said, that everywhere in the British Dependencies they felt the benevolent and discreet assistance given them by the British colonial authorities.

One purpose of the journey was the examination of the situation of Swiss trade with these territories and the possibility of its further expansion. They also wanted to find out the chances which may exist here and there for bilateral direct Swiss development aid. A trip through Africa "in the fateful African year 1960" was a unique occasion to study on the spot the present state of the movement for African emancipation, at least in the British dependencies. There were *ten* independent nations in Africa at the beginning of 1960 — there were only *four* at the end of world-war two — now there were *27*. But *22* other territories in Africa still remained under sovereignty

and tutelage of some European nations. The spread, after the first world-war, of nationalism in Europe with all its consequences quickly conquered the Asian continent after the second. Small wonder, then, that the spark of nationalism, a principle so simple and so convincing, soon reached Africa and was eagerly taken up by African leaders and their followers.

But did leaders and followers realise that their territories had hardly yet reached the state of preparedness essential, that they lacked not only the minimum economic conditions but also lacked sufficient numbers of competent civil officials, that there also was lack of sufficiently trained political leaders, to justify a transfer of power? Few did. People who until lately hardly knew of one another were being swept off their feet by the concept of "Africanism" and "African Personality", a concept which, whatever its meaning otherwise, certainly expressed consciousness of common race and common (past) fate. "Why", they asked, "should the postulate 'government of the people, for the people, and by the people' have validity in Europe but not in Africa?" However, the lure of power, the opportunities of a political career, the chance of sharing the "lavish" life of their former rulers instead of leading, maybe, that of a poor school-teacher, may have forced the pace of many a nationalist political leader as much as mere political argument.

How did British colonial policy fit in against this mental background? It had always been the avowed aim of British colonial policy to prepare their dependencies for self-government. The technique had been fairly uniform. But the time-table of change from a system of semi-autocracy, exercised by the governor and his council of senior officials and a nominated legislative council, to a fully sovereign parliament with responsible government, varied a great deal. Gradually the legislative councils were going through a series of metamorphoses: first by the extension of the number of elected members, then by enlarging the carefully prepared lists of electors, in order to adapt them to the demands of the native population; finally uniting those lists to a common roll, accepting on the executive council native representatives who eventually would obtain the majority — with a native chief minister as head of the government. This development was now, however, being speeded up.

Ghana reaching independence in 1957 made a tremendous impression throughout the British possessions in Africa. Dr. Nkrumah's portrait, the lecturer was told, could be seen in many a Negro hut or kraal in Rhodesia. Ghana's example was followed by Guinea and led in due course to the independence of all other African states within the Communauté — without regard to their preparedness or state of civilisation. To this was added the tremendous moral effect on the population of the whole of Africa of the liberation of the Belgian Congo. Whatever were the repercussions of this precipitate action, the fact that the Congo and the majority of former dependencies in Africa had suddenly obtained independence explained sufficiently why everywhere one found the African restless and adopting the call for "Uhuru" as his watchword.

If it had been possible, the lecturer pointed out, to co-ordinate the process of emancipation in their dependencies by the principal powers no doubt the results would be less alarming. But, after a period of procrastination, the United Kingdom, France and Belgium followed each fundamentally different concepts of policy.

It was difficult to say what was going to take the place of the old colonial rule. Instead of following economic advancement, political reform had run far ahead and without the tutelage of the colonial powers the new states would be in dire need of financial and technical assistance. They would resort to those sources where they could possibly find it. In most of the liberated countries, too, the new nationhood would be confronted by, or even clash with, the old order of tribal organisation. This explained, at least in part, why they so easily turned to autocratic regimes. Africans did not mind strong authority, they asked for it. British parliamentary democracy was an alien system to them. To make it work it would have to be adapted and brought into line with sterner, African, traditions.

The Ambassador pointed out that there were good reasons why progress towards self-government had been speedier in West Africa than in the East. Contact between the former West African dependencies and the United Kingdom had been much closer and of more ancient date. There were no large European minorities. Activity of the Europeans there had been restricted to missions and foreign trade. The white element, one could hardly call them settlers, never made those colonies their second homes.

Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, was in festive mood and dress when they, together with the members of nearly a hundred other delegations, were there for the celebrations of independence. The Nigerian Government did its guests well, as befitted a government representing 35 million people. The town presented itself in an interesting state of transition. Within a large area of African dwellings one suddenly came upon the sight of impressive bank and business buildings. The government area — Ministries, High Court, and Parliament buildings — revealed boldly conceived design and very pleasant modern architecture, typically planned to assert the aspirations of the young nation in the eyes of the outer world.

Of all the new African states, Dr. Daeniker said, and the largest of them, Nigeria offered the best chances for the British model to work. Its present constitution had been worked out and tried over many years. The few dominant tribes were very powerful, thus a rigid centralised organisation, equipped with many checks and balances, had to be designed in order to hold them together and to prevent the major tribes from oppressing the minorities.

Nigeria, with its prosperous economy and liberal economic policy, was offering an interesting market to European nations. The Swiss Colony counted more than 300 members. A Swiss firm, the U.T. Co., of Basle, one of the largest foreign concerns in Nigeria, was instrumental in serving as trade link between the country and Europe. It maintained huge workshops and storehouses as well as department stores in Lagos and other places.

For the traveller there could be no more striking contrast than to proceed from a purely African state,

such as the Federation of Nigeria, to the South African Union; a country where the will to maintain white dominance over the non-white population found its clearest expression. To reserve exclusive control to a white minority in face of a black population numerically three times stronger, was a scheme of frightening boldness especially when applied with such stringent consistency and severity.

Coming from South Africa, outward aspects of life in Southern Rhodesia, at least in towns like Salisbury, appeared to the traveller to be similar to those in the Union. They (Dr. and Madame Daeniker) happened to arrive there the day after the publication of the Monckton Report. There was a great deal of recrimination about some of its conclusions. It appeared that many concepts on which the constitution of the Central African Federation seemed to be firmly based were now hotly disputed.

It had to be borne in mind that these countries came into contact with Western civilisation only about seventy years ago. The natives of to-day were, therefore, only two generations apart from the primitive state of life which the first Europeans found when they arrived there. Southern Rhodesia was conquered and settled from South Africa. To-day the proportions between the two races were one White to twelve Blacks. In Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland the impact of the European element was far less strong. Both these protectorates came under British influence through the activities of missionaries and trading companies; they had largely retained their former social structure, based on tribal organisation and subsistence farming. It was, however, the mineral wealth of the copperbelt in Northern Rhodesia — to-day the third largest producer of copper, besides cobalt and other minerals — which gave an enormous impetus to the economic development of the whole region.

In view of the great differences in numbers between black and white population and the uneven distribution of Europeans over the whole of the three territories, amalgamation had to be discarded and a federation under one central government seemed to be the best solution. The Federation, however, had been opposed vehemently by the African leaders in the North ever since its inception. Rightly or wrongly, they feared that in a federation the predominance of the white settlers in the South would block the way to political emancipation of the black people. Thus, from the political point of view the chances for such an artificial structure as a federation seemed at least doubtful. Economically, on the other hand, the experiment looked most convincing. Its components did not only form one common market, but since prosperity of Northern Rhodesia was dependent mainly on its mineral wealth which was subject to fluctuations in world market prices, it would have its complement in the more balanced economy of the South with its preponderance of farming and small industries. Nyasaland, financially dependent on allowances from the Federation, was mainly agricultural with a surplus of labour. Emigrants from Nyasaland accounted for as much as one-third of the male population.

While the development of the whole region had considerably profited by this happy combination, it also offered an attractive credit basis to foreign investors. Indeed, the influx of outside capital reached a figure

of up to £45million annually, or more than one-quarter of total investment. Salisbury, looking like a prosperous American town, was a jewel of modern architecture. It owed its development mostly to investments by the mining companies and from the United Kingdom. The same applied to the Kariba dam and power station which supplied electrical energy to all parts of the Federation, as far as the copperbelt. It was no doubt one of the greatest achievements of engineering of our time.

The end of the copper boom and political uncertainty had, however, caused a serious setback. Capital influx and white immigration had largely stopped. The present crisis could not be overcome as long as the political problems were in the melting pot. A breakdown of the Federation would have disastrous consequences on the economic development of all its component parts. Such arguments, however, appeared to have little weight with some of the African leaders.

The danger of the break-up of the Central African Federation was a real one and could be checked only by making it more attractive to the large majority of the black population. Wider participation of Africans in the Federation — as was suggested by the Monckton Report — depended on the native population in both Rhodesias being given such extensive political rights as would satisfy them. Draconic police measures to suppress the agitation of the black section would not solve the problem. Weakness and strength of the Federation lie with Southern Rhodesia. However, whatever the chances might be of a more co-operative attitude of African leaders and a more conciliatory frame of mind of the white population, the gates of further development had been opened in Central Africa whereas in South Africa they were kept hermetically closed.

Abolition of the colour bar, on the other hand, would not by itself reduce the gap in opportunities for betterment between white and black, such as in education, the professions, and social rank. So far one could hardly find a black doctor, solicitor, or higher civil servant anywhere in Central Africa. Besides the missionary societies it was the mining companies which had made the greatest endeavours to improve the standards of Africans. Their social welfare and educational activities were admirable.

Their next station, the Ambassador continued, was the island of Zanzibar, where time seemed to have stood still since the island was still part of the Sultanate of Muscat. Yet, even while they were there the old autocratic scheme was being replaced by a more democratic organisation in which, by the way, the women also were to take their full part and where they possessed the right to vote.

Back on the mainland they arrived in Tanganyika a week after celebration of independence. The country, still a trusteeship territory, had lately obtained the status of responsible government. A Cabinet, taking its mandate from a British Governor, was responsible to a parliament freely elected under a restricted franchise by all residents regardless of nationality. It was at present presided over by an Indian. Of the 81 seats ten were allotted to Europeans, another eleven to Asians. But all deputies who were returned unopposed, including the prominent Swiss member, Mrs. Marwalder, with one single exception were elected

on one and the same list of the Tanganyika Nationalist Party. A harmonious and peaceful atmosphere seemed to prevail in public life. The presence of European settlers and of a great number of Arabian and Indian traders had never been a source of conflict; it was no impediment to more and more native farmers taking up cash crop farming; moreover, 50 per cent of the exports were derived from foreign-owned plantations.

This happy and promising state was largely due to the present Chief Minister, Mr. Julius Nyerere, a man of 38 years of age, an active member of the Catholic Church, brought up in the Swiss Mission, afterwards studying at Makerere and Edinburgh, where he gained his M.A.; he then returned as teacher to the Mission and soon afterwards started on his political career with the Nationalist Party. He was a man with balanced views on politics and economics and did not lend his authority to those who wanted to push matters too fast. He was inclined to think that there was less urgent need for full independence of his country than to include it in a federation of self-governing states of all East Africa, eventually even including Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Ruanda Urundi. Responsibility for defence he would leave to Britain. His hope was that "a young country like ours will be able to stay aloof of any block politics and keep an independent position like Switzerland", to quote his own words.

Their visit to Tanganyika, the Ambassador said, was particularly rewarding because they met a flourishing Swiss colony of almost 650 compatriots. Nearly half of this number belong to the Swiss Catholic Missions, Capuchins and Benedictines, priests, nuns, lay brethren and sisters under the active and very competent guidance of Archbishop Maranta of Poschiavo. Their schools with a few tens of thousands of pupils, their hospitals and training centres for arts and crafts, are reputed to be among the very best in the country. On the other hand, the plantations under Swiss management, like the Amboni Estate, an Anglo-Swiss company, or the Burka Coffee Estate at Arusha, had a predominant position in the sisal and coffee trades, the main export products of Tanganyika. The presence of so many experienced Swiss would be an excellent starting point for the technical aid which Swiss business circles were now planning in Tanganyika. Some of us might have read in the *Echo Suisse* of the very promising beginning made with the installation of a training centre for medical rural aids and field inspectors, an initiative taken by the Basle Chemical Industry in conjunction with the Capuchin Mission and the Amboni Estate.

In Kenya they found the outlook less confident and bright. There was no doubt that under the new constitution of 1960, which provided for an African majority in the Legco (parliament), political power in Kenya would soon pass into the hands of the native parties. Whilst such a prospect caused little alarm among the minorities of neighbouring Tanganyika, it was considered disastrous by many Europeans in Kenya who form a minority of slightly more than 1 per cent of a total population of six millions. Land hunger and primitive farming by the native farmers were two of the main causes of the frictions in the country. Since the return to normality after the Mau

Mau troubles progress had been made with the apportioning and consolidation of land in the hands of native farmers under a nation-wide rehabilitation scheme. But the covetous eyes of nationalist leaders were mainly set on the model farming estates now in the hands of a few thousand Europeans in the Highlands. These estates occupied not more than 20 per cent of the arable land, but contributed up to 75 per cent to the exports of agricultural products. Since the former ban of Africans to own land on the white Highlands was now lifted, the settlers knew only too well that an African Government would have ample means to squeeze them out of their possessions, even without nationalisation of the land. They (Dr. and Madame Daeniker) also met a few Swiss settlers who told them despairingly of their troubles. As things stand they could not sell with the hope of getting adequate compensation for a lifetime of hard work and the investments sunk into their estates.

Calmer judgment was prevailing in financial and business circles in Nairobi. But though it was unthinkable that the British Government would abandon its control without being satisfied about adequate safeguards for the minorities, they would be unable to give a formal guarantee to compensate non-Africans for their losses. Nor have any of the African leaders given any assurance to respect the property rights of foreign land-owners. Therefore the general prospect was rather bleak as was shown by the net outflow of private capital during 1960, which was at the rate of one million pounds a month.

The Swiss Colony of 500 comprised besides farmers members of almost all occupations.

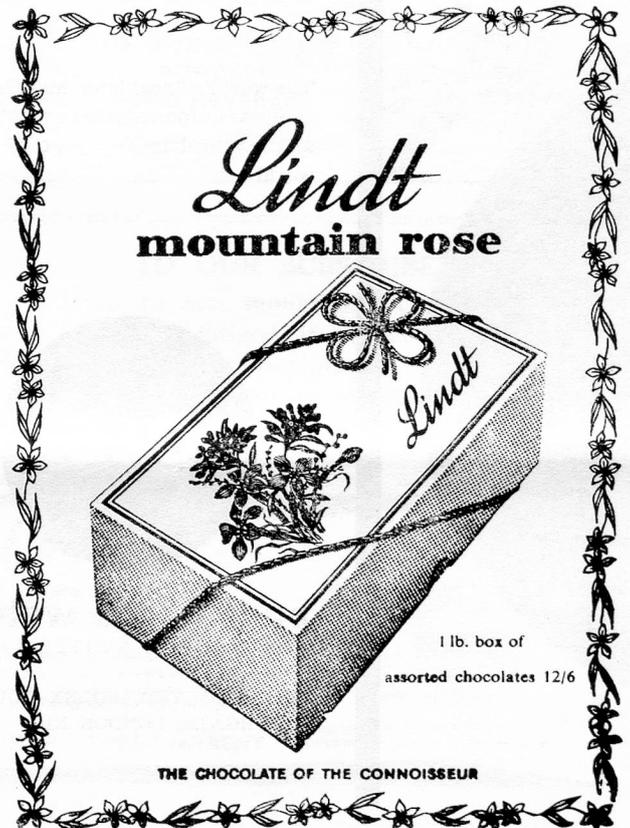
Those who might have formed their opinions about Uganda, the heart of Africa, on the descriptions in Moorhead's excellent book, "The White Nile" — about life at Court a hundred years ago — would be happily disillusioned. The people they met on this last part of their African Journey gave them the impression of a particularly proud, well-educated, and prosperous race. The few towns were mostly of modern architecture, especially the imposing public buildings — a magnificent Parliament House, the Makerere University College, and a modern hospital. 900 students from all parts of East Africa were matriculated at the former, while the latter contained 950 beds. The population was up to 98 per cent uniformly African; there were no European settlers' problems. The presence of a large Asian trading community, however, caused some animosity and almost hostile feelings.

It would interest the audience to hear that only a few days ago a Swiss Commission of experts left for Nairobi on the initiative of the Kenya Government, in order to conduct a survey of the whole of British East Africa (Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika) with regard to the possibilities to grant technical assistance from Switzerland mainly in the agricultural sector. A scheme to place technical students from Kenya in Swiss industries for practical training, and to accept post-graduates in medicine from Makerere College to complete their studies at Swiss Universities, was already under way.

Concluding his lecture Dr. Daeniker said that he was feeling optimistic about the future of Africa, although there were still tremendous difficulties to



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overcome. Of these he mentioned:— The European residents in these countries who cling rigidly to their vested interests and will not adjust their outlook; the rigidity of mind of African political leaders who press for immediate and full independence without regard to the economic consequences; the interference from outside, mainly through Communist infiltration.

Colonialism did not pay any more. He could only hope that the systematic efforts of the British Government, to cope with the pressure of our time and so ensure a new order for those populations, would succeed and that it could be done in peace for their lasting benefit.

Long applause told the lecturer of the appreciation of the audience. But after the main dish there was a sweet to follow. With the assistance of Consul and Mrs. Ribi as 'opérateurs' Dr. Daeniker showed us a series of coloured photographic slides. With few exceptions they were all very good and some of them exquisite, both from the point of the photograph and that of the angles at which the pictures were taken. People, antelopes, in fact most of the fauna of central Africa, and some of the most beautiful views of the land were thrown on the screen. One picture has haunted me ever since: a pride of lions at rest, with father lion seemingly saying "how d'you do?".

JHB.

SWISS CULTURAL LIFE IN FEBRUARY 1961

Shrovetide Carnival

A list of all the Swiss towns and villages where carnival is celebrated would be impossibly long. All the same, special mention must be made of carnival at Lucerne on 9th February, and also on 13th and 14th February, when a monster concert will fill the Mühlenplatz with the tortured strains of local carnival music. Carnival frolics can also be enjoyed at Bienne from 18th to 20th February, at Herisau with a children's procession on 15th February, at Kreuzlingen on 12th February, with a grand carnival pageant, and at Fribourg from 12th to 14th February. At Murten a grand procession is planned for 19th February.

"Fasnacht", as carnival is called in Basle, is a great attraction, and on 20th and 22nd February crowds will be pouring into the town to join in the fun. On the intervening day the great lanterns, cover with satirical cartoons, will be displayed in the Congress Hall of the Swiss Industries Fair Building, where their wit can be enjoyed at leisure. From 6th to 12th February grand drumming concerts at the Kuchlin Theatre are ringing up the curtain on the carnival jinks that follow a week later. In Zurich the two arts balls on 18th and 20th February again form the highlights of a colourful carnival programme with their grotesque costumes and decorations.

Egyptian Art in Zurich

After notable exhibitions of Etruscan and Mexican art in its spacious new building, the Zurich Museum of Fine Arts is to open a new show, entitled "5,000 Years of Egyptian Art", in February. Continuing until April, this exhibition was assembled in Egypt, and will include not only the splendid art of Ancient Egypt but also more recent work from the Country of the Nile.

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