

New Nations

In our preoccupation with the problems posed by the division between the Communist and non-Communist world, we must not lose sight of a development of no less far-reaching implications -- the emergence of a host of former colonial territories as independent nations, each struggling for the material betterment of the standard of life of its citizens. Much of this development is taking place in areas in which Christian missionaries have made such a valuable contribution. Our Commonwealth of Nations has been outstanding for the guidance and leadership given in this field.

It is in Africa that this process is now most significant, with former British territories in the vanguard of those attaining nationhood through peaceful transition. You will have heard it said that 1960 is "Africa's year". The reference, of course, is to the great revolution which has rapidly been gaining momentum in that great continent. You will realize more than most just how extensive and significant is the political change which has taken place there in the last two years. And the end is not yet in sight. Two years ago there were but four independent states south of the Sahara -- Ethiopia, Liberia, the Union of South Africa and Ghana -- the latter, launched in 1957, being the first truly African state to assume independence following the colonial period. Ghana's independence was in a sense an African turning point starting a movement which will have far-reaching consequences.

By the end of this year the role of independent states will include such giants as Nigeria, the Congo and probably the Mali Federation. Looking ahead five years, it would perhaps be simpler to list areas where the African will not be in control of his own destiny than to list those where he will.

The African revolution will profoundly affect the world, Canada included. As a nation which endorses the right of all men to be ultimate arbiters of their own destinies, we can only welcome the change. At the same time, we have the greatest respect and admiration for the British, French and Belgians who have done so much to help Africa prepare for the eventual responsible exercise of sovereignty. This they have done through the years at a cost to themselves which few of us have ever stopped to consider. The transfer of sovereignty can be a painful experience unless it is accomplished in an orderly and careful manner. Canada is watching the change with sympathy and the profound hope that in all cases it will be accomplished successfully and peacefully.

In a material way we are extending help to the emerging states. During 1959, for example, 18 Ghanaians were brought to Canada for training and 7 Canadian experts were sent to Ghana. Nigeria sent one trainee to Canada and I fully expect that with the opening of a Canadian mission in Lagos this spring our assistance will be expanded.