

Africa: time is running out and wisdom is in short supply

The former British colonies

By Lord Home

Anyone who is invited to speak or write about "Africa" should resist the temptation, for any generalization about that continent would be as wide of the mark as it would be if one were referring to Europe.

The North, given a semblance of coherence by the Moslem religion — the West, which for centuries attracted the traders of the Mediterranean and of Europe, far more advanced than the East — the Centre, once colonized by Britain, France and Europe, showing signs of reversion to tribalism — the South, dominated by South African policies, and the divisive political issue of *apartheid*. There is only one generalization that is valid, and that was spoken by the late Chou En-lai, when, on leaving the continent a few years ago, he said: "Africa is ripe for revolution".

There is, unhappily, one large power that is ready to stir the pot of trouble. The U.S.S.R. is arming Libya as a threat to Egypt; it is also sending arms and equipment into Algeria with a view to making things hot for Morocco. There is a Government in Nigeria that is infected with Communism, and in command of a well-trained army. The Soviet Union has used Cubans to take advantage of civil strife in Angola, and is helping Mozambique to organize trouble for Rhodesia.

Little consolidation

Few of the countries in Africa that were once under colonial rule have had time to consolidate law and order, and many of them have not had the competence to do so. Two — Zaire and Zambia, which have

recently shown some signs of stability — now find Communist forces sitting across their lines of communication. Kenya, which has so far been a model for tolerance between the races, and for law and order, has largely relied upon the authority of one man, whose tenure of the Presidency must, in the nature of things, come to an end before long.

Chou En-lai was, unhappily, right. Africa is "ripe for revolution", and the basically tribal organization of the central belt bodes ill for the future. It may be that the Organization of African Unity will be able to preserve some shell of unity; but one cannot avoid apprehension for the future. With the examples of Burundi and Uganda, elementary savagery is in the air.

Until the interference by the U.S.S.R. in Angola and the expectation that the Soviet leaders would try to mobilize Mozambique for guerilla warfare against Rhodesia, it was Southern Africa that showed the most coherence. It is true that law and order was dictated by white minorities in South Africa and Rhodesia, but economically the advance was impressive and politically the minority was not seriously challenged.

But even in these prospering countries the seeds of trouble have been present for a long time. In Rhodesia the proportion of Africans to Europeans is 14 to one. In South Africa the proportion is three to one, with the added complication of a "coloured" section of the community. For both countries — for Rhodesia urgently and for South Africa less urgently — the question was posed whether political power was to be shared and, if so, in what time-scale it should and could be done?

Colonial policy

It is necessary at this point to pause and to recall the nature and purpose of British colonial policy. From the start, the native peoples were trained in the arts of administration and government, so that the ultimate solution of self-government and independence was inevitable.

Perhaps OAU will be able to preserve shell of unity

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