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EDITORIAL

Let's Make All South African Products Taboo



AFRICA in Today's World

By CHARLES I. WEST, M.D.

CHRONIC INSTABILITY, a product of racial and religious strife, has long plagued Sudan, Africa's largest country. It is here that the Arabs of North Africa meet the Negroes of Central Africa--and they have not learned how to get along together.

Less than 100 years ago, the Arabs still were trading in Negro slaves. In the 20 years immediately preceding our own Civil War, it is estimated that over one million Sudanese blacks were sold into slavery. Bitter memories of these deprivations persist today in the southern regions of a country that covers more square miles (987,500) than Alaska, Texas and Nevada combined.

More recently, especially in the past six years, the Arabs have tried to force the Islamic faith on the southern Negroes, most of whom are pagans practicing animism or fertility rites. Christian missionaries have been driven out, their schools taken over by the Arab-controlled government and their churches converted into mosques.

Differences in language, culture and national interests also have divided the country. The Arab quarrel with Israel, for example, is of little or no concern to the southern Negroes. And Arab professions of support for pan-African unity are suspected to be based on expediency.

In view of these divisive factors, and despite the dominance and higher cultural level of the Arabs, it is questionable whether Sudan can continue to exist as one nation.

An Arab proverb claims, "When Allah made the Sudan, Allah laughed." If so, Allah must have laughed at his own caprice, because the country is as diverse geographically as it is from a human standpoint.

Within its vast expanse of territory is an immense northern stretch of desert (along the southeastern fringe of the Sahara) where life is virtually nonexistent. In the south are rain forests and swamps where people go naked and lions, elephants, hippopotami, crocodiles and other wild animals abound. Most of the 12,500,000 Sudanese live in the rich farmland of the central region, where they cultivate the country's principal export, cotton.

Sudan became an independent republic on Jan. 1, 1956, after more than half a century of joint Anglo-Egyptian rule. The Egyptians had moved south early in the last century, lured by ivory, gold and the slave trade. The British moved in when Egyptian power began to crumble.

There was a brief period of anarchy after Mohammed Ahmed, the son of a poor Nubian, proclaimed himself the Islamic messiah foretold by the prophet Mohammed, raised a huge Sudanese army and overran the British occupation forces in 1885. The legendary British commander, Gen. C. G. (Chinese) Gordon, waited in vain for the relief dispatched too late by Prime Minister William Gladstone and was cut down in his palace on the Blue Nile by the fanatic dervishes.

Mohammed Ahmed survived him by only five months and Gordon was avenged 13 years later when Sudan again fell to the British and Egyptians.

Next week we will describe the progress--if that is the appropriate word--in Sudan since the turn of the century.

LET JOY BE UNCONFINED!

South Africa finally has been made safe for man's injustice to his fellow-man. Or so thinks "Justice Minister" Balthazar Vorster--unless he changes his mind in the next few days.

Recent dispatches from Pretoria indicate that Vorster, who plays Heinrich Himmler to Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd's portrayal of Adolph Hitler in this generation's most appalling human tragedy, intends to suspend South Africa's infamous 90-day detention law next Monday, Jan. 11.

This is the law that has empowered South African police to jail anyone suspected of opposing the government's rigid white supremacy (apartheid) policies for an unlimited and unbroken series of 90-day terms without trial, or even being charged with a specific crime.

The law can be invoked (and repeatedly has been) if the police merely "think" someone is harboring humane or democratic thoughts. Hundreds of South Africans--white as well as black--have been "detained" indefinitely under this monstrous throwback to the Spanish Inquisition of the 15th century. It has been denounced throughout the civilized world (with certain sections of our own South excepted) as a flagrant violation of fundamental human rights.

SUSPENSION OF THE LAW had been promised by Vorster as soon as he was satisfied South Africa "could do without it." But in announcing relaxation of the stricture, he warned he would not hesitate to reinstate it "should the need arise." Vorster said he feels the police now has the country's security "under control," with only some "mopping up of subversive elements" to be carried out.

("Subversive elements", of course, means those black natives of South Africa who resent being treated like cattle instead of human beings.)

Lest any believe suspension of the detention law indicates a change of heart by Verwoerd's government in regard to strict enforcement of its white supremacy policies in the predominantly Negroid nation, we hasten to disenchant them.

A new law that will drastically affect the lives of all black Africans in South Africa living outside areas specifically "reserved" for them goes into effect tomorrow, Jan. 8. The Bantu Laws Amendment Act, passed during the last session of Parliament, will tighten control over Africans in so-called white areas, both urban and rural.

Under the Verwoerd government's policy of racial separation, certain areas of South Africa have been gratuitously "set aside" for blacks. One of these, the Transkei, has been granted limited self-rule, but power is largely vested in tribal chieftains "bought and paid for" by the Pretoria regime.

The new act further reduces the pitifully few rights the blacks have had in the white areas. These include the right to live in such areas if an African has worked continuously for one employer for 10 years or for several employers for 15 years.

IN PILOTING THE BILL through Parliament, Michiel Botha, Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, contended the measure "to a large extent" coordinated and streamlined existing legislation. The act amends 11 laws regulating blacks passed between 1911 and 1963. But it also incorporates new restrictions, and these provoked vigorous opposition both in and out of Parliament.

Botha explained that the bill provided for the "removal" from white areas of Africans who were there "illegally . . . who were workshy . . . undesirable . . . or superfluous."


The section empowering the government to remove "superfluous" Africans from white areas was severely criticized by Sir de Villiers Graaff, leader of the opposition United party. He flatly labeled the provision "an intensification of the migratory labor system," (the latter actually being a "forced labor" device).

Mrs. Helen Suzman, the only member of Parliament belonging to the Progressive party,

claimed the bill deprived the African of "every pretension to being a free human being in the country of his birth and reduces him to the level of a chattel."

Until Verwoerd, Vorster and the rest of their motley crew suffer the same well-deserved fate as Hitler, Himmler and their maniacal cronies, or are otherwise supplanted by a more reasonable South African government, the American Negro should--and must--boycott all exports from South Africa.

That is the least anyone can do to protest the outrageous treatment accorded his ethnic brethren in the southernmost part of the Dark Continent.



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