

The Negro Takes Stock

CHIEF AMOAH III of the Gold Coast spoke at the London session of the Pan-African Congress. He is small, black and earnest, a descendant of ancient rulers of the Gold Coast, never enslaved; and now a cocoa merchant resident in London many years. He was a significant figure.

For Mr. Hutchinson, a London mulatto barrister, also from West Africa, told us one night how, a quarter of a century ago, he himself planted the first cocoa tree in that region and how today Nigeria and the British West Coast are the greatest cocoa-producing areas in the world. But singularly enough the economic development there has not been at all according to modern theory. It has not been a case of the advent of foreign-owned capital with captains of industry driving native slaves, but a development of peasant proprietorship or small plantations with black owners working in a leisurely way as they wish, being their own masters, and yet turning out this mass of products.

It was at this point that Sir Sidney Olivier, former Governor of Jamaica, impressed upon us, in his remarks, that just here Africa could teach the modern economic world. The independence of the black worker, his demand for leisure and art, the word of the newer science as to the possibilities of his normal human developments -all this emphasized the need of an international Pan-African movement to conserve African genius and power and to fight for the black man's freedom.

All is not well in West Africa, we were again and again told, because the black man there has so limited a voice in his own government. His is a crown colony of the restricted type with only figureheads and favorites appointed to the advisory council of the governors, and these councils without decisive power. In the great Imperial Conference in London there was not a single black face and perhaps the greatest fact brought before the Pan-African Congress was this disfranchisement of fifty million Negroes in the British Empire.

Yet all hope is not lost: there was no direct voice from South Africa in our counsels -to reach the natives there is not only a matter of distance but of intervening white opinion -but all over England and Europe the presence of General Smuts, Premier of the Union of South Africa, forced this problem continually to the fore; for if the black man is still confined beneath the service of imperial politics, the brown man of India has found voice and power. Again and again Smuts was compelled to interrupt his Sermon on the Mount about the naughty and stubborn French to explain that any effort in South Africa to recognize the manhood of Indian or Negro would overthrow "white civilization" at the Cape.

The sinister influence of this intransigence of South Africa is seen in Mozambique. The new Portuguese Colonial Code is most liberal and recognizes the full Portuguese citizenship of educated natives with the right to vote. Until recently, the magistrates, tax-getters and minor officials of

Mozambique were black or colored; and schools and missionary effort, while scarce, were unhindered. Today, the members of the Mozambique Company -an English concern -have by economic pressure of England on a weak, distracted Portugal obtained a fifty-year franchise in the colony with powers that make them absolute masters of the land; they can and do oppose

and suppress schools and missions; they virtually enslave native labor and recruit it for their mines of South Africa; and they have made the colony pay dividends instead of taxing the impoverished mother country. Of such is the Kingdom of Capital!

How can the force of world public opinion be brought to bear on such outrages? Many Europeans like Harold Laski are still hoping for much from the mandates of the League of Nations. Mr. Laski addressed the Pan-African Congress on November 8 and made the striking suggestions that the League of Nations send to each of the mandated territories like Tanganyika, Southwest Africa, Cameroun and Togoland an accredited minister of the League; that this minister should be a national of some other country than the holder of the mandate; that he should be a trained anthropologist and that he should have the right to investigate conditions and report regularly to the League.

The muddle in British Kenya emphasizes the necessity of some international action. Here is a great, fertile and rich territory; our Congress was continually reminded by voices within and without that an astonishing piracy on a huge scale is there being deliberately perpetrated. England is taking the land from the natives, enslaving and confining them to native reserves and mistreating them outrageously. One speaker said, "There is ample evidence to show that flogging and shooting of natives in that region have developed into a system. For trivial, imaginary and suspected offences a varying number of lashes with the 'reim' or the 'kiboko' is inflicted on the helpless and inarticulate natives. From time to time death ensues as a result of these brutalities. The verdicts invariably returned by the jury (composed exclusively of white settlers) are a scandal and the sentences imposed by the judges are in consequence utterly inadequate."

On top of this, the East Indians, pushing in here and demanding a share of this vast theft of land and exploitation of labor, are through the influence and fears of South Africa disfranchised politically and economically and are protesting against this with the utmost vigor and indignation. How singular, this threefold battle, and how Impossible is a West Coast native growth here, with its foundation in native land ownership!

From Uganda, which is officially joined to the Kenya Protectorate, a moving appeal was sent the Congress. It represented the other extreme of white oppression -either the whites seek directly to exploit and enslave or failing that power they leave the natives carefully isolated and alone and call this "ruling through the chiefs." If the native rulers were encouraged in education and inspired by outer ideals in industry and social life here would be splendid opportunity.

As to the great valley of the Congo in the red and black forests of Belgian sovereignty there was almost complete silence in our Congress. The Union Congolaise, an organization of black men in Belgium and Belgian Africa, had nothing to suggest but the erection at the mouth of the Congo of a great memorial statue to the black soldiers who died in the Great War! I fear such a stone figure would look with tears upon even the reformed régime in the Congo! The fundamental conception of the Congo as a place where capital can make huge profits by using labor of the cheapest price and driving it by physical force still seems dominant.

Our French group sent the assistant secretary of our organization, resident in Paris, and one member of the Bureau Permanent. But French Negrodom is at once the most inactive and at the same time the most inspiring part of our movement. Inspiring because France has gone further, much further, in recognizing the manhood of black folk than any other white nation.

One West African girl told me at the Congress of her isolation in British Africa, as an educated woman, between the natives and the British official rulers, but of the joy and naturalness of social intercourse in French Senegal where she went to visit her uncle.

Here then is France challenging the rest of the white world by bidding for the military and industrial support of black men. England, America and white Europe are aghast at the prospect. What can they do?

They have one clear path along which France points: Make black Englishmen, black Americans and Belgian Congolese have cause to believe in the justice of their countries and the possibility of developing real black manhood under their flags. France has played this trump card.

As was natural, America dominated the Third Pan-African Congress with the attempt to spread the results of her experience in organized fighting. A black bishop of a church body which has three-fourths of a million American blacks spoke to us and told us that he was on his way to dedicate a school in Basutoland, given by the colored women of Ohio!

We were not a large group at this Third Congress -only thirteen countries and six American states as against thirty countries in 1921. But we have, I believe, weathered a natural crisis of growth in a time of universal industrial crisis and we can look forward to a Congress in the West Indies in 1925 in the midst of the growing agitation

there for home rule and responsible government.

Meantime we drew up again our charter of rights and adjourned to go to Lisbon in Portugal for a second session. And this is our charter:

The Executive Committee of the Third Pan-African Congress, meeting in London and Lisbon in November, 1923, regards the following matters as those which seem to them to embody the legitimate and immediate needs of the peoples of African descent.

1. A voice in their own government.
2. The right of access to the land and its resources.
3. Trial by juries of their peers under established forms of law.
4. Free elementary education for all; broad training in modern industrial technique; and higher training of selected talent.
5. The development of Africa for the benefit of Africans, and not merely for the profit of Europeans.
6. The abolition of the slave trade and of the liquor traffic.
7. World disarmament and the abolition of war; but failing this, and as long as white folk bear arms against black folk, the right of blacks to bear arms in their own defence.
8. The organization of commerce and industry so as to make the main objects of capital and labor the welfare of the many, rather than the enriching of the few.

These seem to us the eight general and irreducible needs of our people.

Specifically and in particular we ask for the civilized British subjects in West Africa and in the West Indies the institution of home rule and responsible government, without discrimination as to race and color.

We ask for such areas as Northern Nigeria, Uganda and Basutoland, a development of native law, industry and education with the specific object of training them in home rule and economic independence and for eventual participation in the general government of the land.

We ask for French Africa the extension of the citizenship rights of voting and of representation in Parliament from Senegal and the West Indies to other parts of the colonies as rapidly as the present comprehensive plans of education can be realized.

We demand for Kenya, Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa the restoration of rights to the land to the natives, a recognition of their right to a voice their own government and the abolition of the pretensions of a white minority to dominate a black majority, and even to prevent their appeal to the civilized world.

In the Belgian Congo we fail yet to see any decision change from a regime of profit-making and exploitation to an attempt to build modern civilization among human beings for their own good and the good of the world We demand a system of state education, the recognition of native law, a voice in government and the curbing of commercial exploitation in that great land.

For the independent nations of Abyssinia, Haiti and Liberia we ask not merely political integrity, but the emancipation from the grip of economic monopoly an usury at the hands of the money-masters of the world

For the Negroes of the United States of America we ask the suppression of lynching and mob-law, the of caste and the recognition of full citizenship despite race and color.

We demand the restoration of the Egyptian S to an independent Egypt.

We demand for Portuguese Africa release from the slave-trading industrial monopolies financed in England and France which today nullify the liberal Portug Code in Mozambique.

We urge in Brazil and Central America that people of African descent be no longer satisfied with a solution of the Negro problem which involves their absorption into another race, without allowing Negroes as such full recognition of their manhood and right to be.

We ask the League of Nations to appoint diplomatic representatives in the mandated territories with duties to investigate and to report conditions.

We ask the appointment of representatives of the Negro race on the Mandates Commission and in the International Labor Bureau.

In fine, we ask in all the world that black folk be treated as men. We can see no other road to peace and progress. What more paradoxical figure today froat the world than the official head of a great South Africa state striving blindly to build peace and good will Europe by standing on the necks and hearts of million of black Africans?

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