

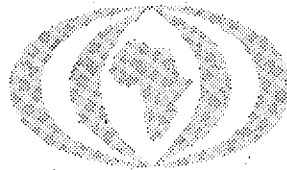
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ADJUSTMENT OF WHITES TO BLACK RULE IN EAST AND WEST AFRICA

Ronald Watts

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There is no doubt a lively interest in South Africa about conditions for white people in the black African states to the north. I have gained experience in the last twenty six years of working in many African countries, including Angola, Zaire, Botswana, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia. The subject of this article has implications for the problems of South Africa, which I think are very difficult ones. It seems to me that people in other countries often over-simplify South Africa's problems. Therefore this article will aim at an objective approach in just describing what is happening in other countries, without any particular implications for South Africa, although the implications may be drawn by those wishing to do so.

By and large, it seems that experience of black majority rule has been a disappointment to many people, including myself. I was in Nigeria in 1958 and I was Africanised at that time shortly before independence. One had, at that time, fairly high expectations for independence but it proved disappointing. Whether that disappointment was inevitable is an open question. But it would seem to be true to say that, for most countries, independence has been disappointing for people of European origin as well as for the local African people.

On the other hand, the granting of independence and of majority rule to these countries was an inevitable step and the right thing to do. Moreover, the British authorities have, on the whole, made a reasonably good job of steering their former colonies to independence. One's main criticism would be that in many cases the time span has not been long enough from the date when it was decided that independence was going to be given to the date of the achievement of full independence. Many countries would have benefited from a longer time span and it is interesting, in the case of the last British territory to gain independence, Zimbabwe, that Mr Mugabe asked the British to stay longer than they had intended to. Even so it was a very short period between the decision to grant independence and its implementation.

Having worked in a number of countries during the transition period immediately preceding independence, it seems to me that that period was the most constructive one in their recent development. It was a time when race relations were generally good as the steam had been taken out of the nationalist drive, leading to an improvement in relations between White and Black. Whites were not seen

as a threat - they were seen as helping to prepare the way for independence. There was no diversion of energies into military matters at that time, because the colonial power still maintained an army. So it was at this transitional stage that energies could be concentrated on development; on questions such as building roads, on education, on the things that were really needed by the people. It is in the later period, after full independence, that one notices that many of these countries have diverted far too much of their resources into building up armies and foreign missions, which in many cases are unnecessarily large. As a result many of the development aspects of these countries have been neglected. Only recently I visited an African diplomatic mission in Geneva. It had an office with about twenty rooms, approximately three of which were occupied.

One of the more recent diversions for many of these countries has come about through aid, which during that transition I mentioned, came almost entirely from the colonial power. But once full independence has been gained, aid becomes more and more diversified, so that in Zambia at present there is a food programme, just announced by the President, which will involve twenty-five different countries, ranging from the Chinese Peoples' Republic to the United States. Each country is being asked to contribute funds for use in starting state farms in different parts of the country. This search for aid is a diversion which leads to the prolonged absence from office of important members of government and to the shelving of decisions on urgent domestic issues such as farm prices.

It may be a slight over-simplification, but one gains the impression that some people in South Africa see Black Africa to the north of the Zambezi as being under the control of the East Germans, the Russians and the Cubans. There was an interesting report by the London Sunday Telegraph's correspondent, Peter Taylor, who visited Rhodesia in 1978. He reported on a visit to the Victoria Falls, where he went on the Sundowner cruise up the river. After going a couple of miles up river they rounded the end of an island and were confronted by another boat, also on a Sundowner cruise, but coming from the Zambian side. Those on the Rhodesian boat were rather astounded to find that all the people on the Zambian boat were white and the comment was; "They must be East Germans". Having lived in Zambia for the last three years, I have yet to meet an East German. There obviously are some in the country, but their presence has been exaggerated by the press. Not just the South African press but also by the western press generally. In fact, in Zambia there are still approximately 500 white farmers, a number of whom have Afrikaans names. This is, of course, a

very small number compared with South Africa, but in terms of production these farmers are responsible for between a third and a half of commercial production of crops such as maize. They are very significant in the economy of the country and even to day they have quite a strong political pull on the government. The government certainly listens to them as was evidenced recently at the Copper-belt Agricultural Show when the Minister of Agriculture was button-holed by a group of these farmers who were pressing him on questions such as crop prices. So one of the aims of this article is to try and correct some of those impressions which have arisen due to people being misled by the press.

Prospects for integration.

My main conclusion on the reaction of Whites to black rule is that the basic attitude to integration with Africans has little to do with whether Whites choose to stay or to leave these countries. This is perhaps a topical thing to consider in view of the current exodus from Zimbabwe. To take the example of Zambia - many of the liberals, the people who were sympathetic to people like President Kaunda prior to independence, have in fact left. Many of them, it seems, are to a greater or lesser extent disappointed with the progress made since independence. In contrast many of the very conservative people who opposed the moves towards independence, and who were supporters of people like Sir Roy Welensky, are still living in Zambia. My conclusion here is that people stay on in these countries for practical reasons and not basically for idealistic reasons. They stay on because they see an opportunity either to make money or to make a contribution, perhaps in medicine or as a missionary, rather than for ideals or out of loyalty. On the other hand, many of those Whites who became Zambian citizens at the time of independence have been rather disappointed and some of them have since left the country, whereas many who decided against taking Zambian citizenship have remained.

One of the most intriguing cases of a White who has become fully integrated in an African society is that of Philip Leakey in Kenya. He was successful quite recently in an election at Langata in Kenya. That a White should have been elected by an almost entirely black electorate seems almost impossible to credit in Johannesburg. Yet it has happened, and John Worrall, who has been a press correspondent in Nairobi for many years says; "Philip Leakey's acquaintance with Langata was not only with elite Whites, Browns and Blacks. Actually Langata is a huge constituency embracing some of the worst slums in Nairobi, stretching

down to the industrial area and including Kibera, which could be called a microcosm of Kenya's electorate. Mr Leakey addressed huge meetings, literally containing almost all Kenya's ethnic groups and communities. Only a handful of Langata's elite voted for him. His strength came from the vast African majority in the constituency. Why they voted so is another question. But his victory was nothing to do with the fact that Langata is an exclusive suburb of Nairobi". John Worrall was writing to justify an editorial written by a Nigerian in an African magazine, which expressed enthusiasm at Leakey's success. He was also refuting the opinion expressed elsewhere that an elite group had voted him in. Philip Leakey is a son of the late Dr Louis Leakey, the anthropologist, who himself made an extraordinary contribution to inter-racial relations in Kenya. He was born in Kenya in 1902 and was the first white baby to be seen by the Kikuyu tribe. (Apparently crowds came to see what he looked like at the time). He later studied Kikuyu at Cambridge University and at the end of his course there was no one qualified to examine him. In 1952 he was an interpreter at the trial of Jomo Kenyatta, where he was constantly criticized by Mr Pritt, the QC. hired to defend Kenyatta. He finally withdrew but never had any doubt that Kenyatta could have used his influence to stop the Mau-Mau. He did however have a deep appreciation of the frustrations that caused Mau-Mau and was sympathetic to African aspirations. Kenyatta held no grudge against him and they later met after independence. Through Malcolm MacDonald, the Governor-General, President Kenyatta assisted Leakey in sorting out problems connected with his citizenship and he became a Kenyan citizen. Philip Leakey's election can be seen as an encouraging development and one hopes that it may eventually be repeated in other parts of Africa.

Factors which affect white people's decisions.

Let us now consider some of the factors which affect white people's choice of whether to stay on in a state under black majority rule or to leave. This will relate quite a lot to Zimbabwe, which I have just visited for two days on my way from Zambia. Here one of the crucial factors seems to be that white Zimbabweans are facing questions of local investment and property, and the fact that there is a limit of about \$1 000 to what they are allowed to take out of the country. This obviously is a crucial factor influencing people's decisions whether to leave or to remain. Relative job opportunities are a critical factor, too, which will vary greatly between individuals. Relative education opportunities are very critical for people with children of school-going age and in Zambia

this has led to a number of people leaving the country because they do not want to send their children to boarding schools in a distant place. The long-term future for children is another factor, and it is interesting now to see a few young white people, born or brought up in Zambia, coming back after they have completed their university training. A number of these Whites are in fact coming back to try and serve the country of their birth. Whether they will remain for their lifetime is another matter, of course, but they do seem to have some sort of loyalty to Zambia even though in many cases they were educated either in South Africa or in Europe.

The self-employed are in a rather different position and there is an interesting example of a man in Lusaka who is a sign writer. He has very few formal qualifications and would find it very difficult to find employment in government or to obtain a work permit. He is of Dutch extraction, has lived for many years in South Africa but prefers to stay on in Lusaka partly because of his capital being tied up there. Another reason is that he does not face the competition that he would face as a sign writer in South Africa. So for the self-employed much depends on the particular skill they have and the opportunities they find for earning a living.

Then there are the political views of people, which may influence their decision to stay or leave. But, as has already been stated, this does not seem to be a deciding factor for the majority. Mr Ian Smith has been saying that the radio commentaries put out by the new government are an important factor causing Whites to leave Zimbabwe. I have heard a number of these commentaries and they are couched in Marxist language which one would have thought would have gone over the heads of 99 per cent of Zimbabweans. One would also think that the actual impact of these commentaries on the people of Zimbabwe is going to be very slight, although they are obviously aimed at indoctrination. The general wording of the commentaries is as if they were written by a university lecturer without any attempt to make them understandable to the ordinary citizen. It is doubtful whether they are really going to have much impact on Blacks, but, according to Mr Ian Smith, they have an impact on Whites. There is no evidence that this was the original intention. Certainly in most black states these days Whites usually prefer the BBC or Voice of America to their local radio station.

Then there is the question of the integration of clubs, which obviously is a move which either precedes independence or follows soon after. Even in Lusaka

today, after many years of independence, there is a club which is sometimes described in the press as 'Little Pretoria'. Yet at least a third of the people partaking in the sports are black, but there does remain - maybe mainly in the bars - an overtone of the old days.

Keys to survival.

The major key to survival for Whites staying on in a black state is, I think, that they must be there to mutual advantage. They must be in the country to their own advantage, obviously otherwise they are going to leave, but also to the advantage of the indigenous people. There is an interesting contrast here between Kenya and Zambia in relation to the survival of white farmers. As has been mentioned, in Zambia there are still between four and five hundred white farmers. In Kenya, as I was told recently, there are only a handful, perhaps ten to a dozen white farmers left. Some have stayed on as managers of state farms and in related areas, but there are only ten or twelve actual farmers with their own farms. The major factor in Kenya is that it is a country where land with any potential for cultivation is in short supply. There is also a very successful group of African farmers with skills enabling them to take over from some of the Whites. Moreover, it is a country where food production is a major part of the economy and where there is a large surplus, in fact a major export of agricultural products. In Kenya many white farmers have had to leave, encouraged partly of course by the British scheme which helped them to get their money out of the country. In Zambia, on the other hand, there are still roughly half the original number who were there at independence, when there were in the region of a thousand. In Zambia, there was no British scheme to buy them out, so it has been difficult, particularly in recent years, for people to sell up and transfer their capital elsewhere. But more importantly, land in Zambia is plentiful and there is little pressure on land. There is no strong feeling amongst Africans, with the exception of certain limited areas in the South, that Whites occupy their land and should be evicted. Further, there are very few skilled Zambian farmers. Two years ago a Zambian Cabinet Minister who wanted to hire a manager insisted that it should not be a Zambian, but a Rhodesian, precisely because there are very few skilled Zambians ready to manage large farms. Zambia has recently been plagued by food shortages and it is accepted by the vast majority of Africans that the white farmers are necessary to try and maintain food production. Then too, the export of agricultural produce has never been very significant in Zambia. So one finds a contrast between Zambia and Kenya. In Zambia it

is to the mutual advantage of Blacks and Whites that the latter should stay for reasons of developing agriculture. In Kenya, white farmers are only accepted for the large-scale farms in the arid zones which are very difficult to divide up and give to African farmers. Whites such as Lord Delamere, who had large estates, have survived in relatively dry areas either in the Rift Valley or to the north of Mount Kenya and the Aberdares.

Yet another key to survival is the provision of employment. I think if Whites are going to survive in these countries they must be seen to be providing employment for indigenous people and preferably expanding and providing more employment in the future. This is obviously the key to Mr Mugabe's apparent change of tack (as some people have seen it) - in making every effort to keep his white population. He is fearful that employment will fall off if Whites leave and I think it is widely accepted in these countries that some Whites are necessary for the provision of jobs for Blacks. This is a very important key, I believe, to the survival of white people in Africa. The main justification is going to be whether they are producing jobs and training black people for jobs. If they are seen as doing that I think it gives them a much better prospect of living in a state which has black majority rule. Then, too, another key to survival is maintaining courtesy to people of other races. In this regard, it is also important for survival in these countries to know where one can speak one's mind and where one cannot. One example of this occurred in Uganda where a UN official started chatting to a Ugandan in a bar and at the end of the conversation the Ugandan said; "I will see tomorrow that you are collected, and you will get the hot-oil treatment", (which involved putting someone into a drum of hot oil). The Ugandan concerned turned out to be a Major Maliyamungu, who was President Amin's Chief Executioner. Fortunately for the UN man there was a flight leaving early the next morning and he was able to be removed before anything happened. Survival involves at best avoiding bars or at the least keeping quiet if one does frequent them.

Frustrations and compensations.

Obviously there are a lot of frustrations to working in these states and one can say that there has been a gradual increase in these frustrations in recent years. There is very little sign in a country like Zaire that the frustrations are being overcome. The sort of frustrations one experiences are bureaucratic ones, such as trying to get a driving licence, or work permit, and shortages of all sorts of commodities. Others include lots of police and army road-blocks

which often are not very well organised, power cuts, water failures, theft and a general lowering of the security situation. For farmers a major factor is the unavailability of spare parts for equipment. These can all be very frustrating and obviously become too much for some people, causing them to leave the country.

But there are compensations which I would like to stress because they explain why many people continue to work in these countries. The first is a financial one, particularly for people on aid terms who have very significant financial attractions. Some of the expatriates in Zambia are getting incomes of the order of R20 000 to R30 000 a year, tax free, and over and above that, they are sometimes young men who miss doing military service as a bonus. So there are strong financial incentives for some people. Sport is still relatively easily enjoyed in these countries, there is plenty of time in which to practise it and the facilities are still quite good. Wildlife is a big attraction for certain people and the general sort of outdoor life one leads is a further attraction. Added to these compensations there is the climate, and then last but not least, interest in one's work. In my own case, and in the case of my wife, who is a doctor, we did go back to settle in the UK for a time. My wife worked in the National Health Service but she found it stifling, and felt she was not really achieving very much. We both knew of the needs in a country like Zambia and we feel that we are making a more useful contribution by working there.

Conclusions.

In conclusion, therefore, it seems to me that one cannot categorise those who leave or those who stay in Black African states according to politics or ideology. There are various reasons influencing people's decisions. My other conclusion is that despite the undoubted frustrations, there are still many people who choose to work in African countries and who find some satisfaction in doing so. This is not always just for the financial rewards. I think particularly of the missionaries, many of whom are not on a particularly good financial basis. Thirdly, where there is a complete breakdown in the running of a country it may be impossible to actually achieve anything in one's work and in such a case it is probably best to leave. Except for short term relief assignments it is also probably best to avoid such countries until they have sorted out their affairs and are making headway. One has recently heard that it's just not possible to do a constructive job in Uganda because there is still an almost total breakdown in the functioning of government.

Largely due to inflation, government servants cannot live on their salaries and so they are forced to hold one or two other jobs and consequently half the time they are not in the office. But the situation in these countries is changing constantly and the same man who commented on Uganda was himself evicted at very short notice from the Sudan at a time when the Southern Sudan rebelled against the North. Being a missionary he was seen as a supporter of the Southern Sudanese. Thereupon he found a place in Uganda and almost ten years later he was still working in Uganda - on the border with Rwanda - at a time when the situation became tense and the army was active in the area. He was arrested and again evicted almost simultaneously with peace being found in the Sudan. He was then invited back to the Sudan by the government to fill a very senior post. Thus one sees that there is often a cycle of events and one just has to find out from year to year where the best opportunities exist to do a constructive job.

I am convinced that white people will be needed in black majority-ruled states for many years to come, either as birds of passage or as permanent residents. But, on the other hand, it may be necessary for the peaceful development of these states that some white people have to leave. One cannot for instance say that in Zimbabwe all Whites should stay. It is probably necessary that some should leave particularly where they occupy posts which could be easily done by Blacks. The new government has to create many jobs for its black supporters, this making it imperative for some Whites to leave. But one hopes that the sort of breakdown that occurred in Zaire may be avoided in Zimbabwe.