

M A D A G A S C A R

By

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This paper, containing the text of a talk given at a meeting  
of the Witwatersrand Branch, as well as the discussions which  
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NOTE: This is the basic text of a talk given at private meetings of the Witwatersrand Branch (26 May) and the Pretoria Branch (23 June) of the Institute. The discussion which follows the talk has been reproduced, with the minimum of editing, from a tape recording of the Witwatersrand Branch meeting.

Madagascar - our little known neighbour; so far, yet so near in modern terms of time and distance. It is now within five hours of us by 737 Boeings of SAA and Air Madagascar.

Madagascar is more than twice the size of Great Britain - 592.000 square kilometres against Britain's 244 000; it stretches nearly the full length of Portuguese Mozambique from the Rio Rovuma, Mozambique's northern frontier with Tanzania, right down to Lourenco Marques, 1500 kilometres to the South. The island is surrounded by a multitude of smaller islands, like the whale surrounded by a family of smaller fish : The Comores, the Seychelles, Réunion and Rodrigues and bravely far out in the Indian Ocean : Mauritius.

When you go to Madagascar, for sure you will fly. The bird's eye view to us South Africans, is something quite unusual : a very green, very watery aspect of the moon - lagoons and deltas, rapidly followed by vast plains and craters, everywhere shining patches of water, some mountains, numerous bright green rice fields, and then the varied and disturbed aspects of the plateaus. A sight so extraordinarily different to South Africa, yet the geological formation is that of the Karoo system, with which we are well familiar.

In outline an irregular lozenge, the island is orientated north-east - south-west, and it lies wholly within the tropical zone of the Indian Ocean. Throughout almost all of its length run the central or high plateaus which fall off abruptly to the eastern coast and more gradually to the west - the term "plateau" is really incorrect, because the central area is punctuated with mountains which have an average height of 1000 metres and the only flat areas are those formed by lakes or rice fields. Eroded and often infertile, the central plateaus are nevertheless the most important region of the island from the stand point of political history and population concentration. They cover approximately a third of the island.

The country is divided in two, both geographically and historically - and though it is, of course, a simplification, the French refer to everything in Madagascar as : La Côte et les Plateaux - and to the people as the Côtiers, those who live on the coast, and the Hovas, for those who live on the plateaus.

The narrow east coast region has soil and climatic conditions that make it suitable for the production of valuable foodstuffs; it has water which comes cascading down the cliffs often as high as 100 metres; the water spreads out into the narrow plain and feeds numerous lagunes before flowing into the sea. The east coast, however, is difficult of access and dangerous for shipping owing to numerous offshore reefs and frequent typhoons. The western coast has rolling pasture lands of the savannah type, criss-crossed by numerous rivers which form vast deltas before running into the Mozambique channel; none of these rivers are navigable for any long stretch.

Climatic conditions are widely varied and rainfall distribution is very uneven: chilly in the island's centre, warm and humid on the east coast, hot and very dry in the south which has an exotic appearance and is known as "le pays des épineux" (country of the thorny plants), in the west it is alternatively dry and rainy in distinct seasons. The average temperature at Tananarive is 18.4 degrees Celsius - that is about 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Nossi-Bé is 25 degrees Celsius : May to October is the best season, but I have been there at the height of the summer and it is quite bearable.

The country is divided into six provinces and each province has a "chef-lieu" or capital. They are Diego Suarez, Tananarive, Fianarantsoa, Majunga, Tamatave and Tuléar. In fact, the territorial structure is very similar to that of France. Within the provinces there are the same divisions : communes, préfectures, sous-préfectures, etc.

Now just to round off this very brief inspection of the property : two small islands, both very beautiful, flank the main island : on the west coast Nossi-Bé, on the east coast Ste Marie, both within 20 kilometres of the main island. They are like two jewels, an emerald, Ste Marie, because of the green sea; a sapphire, Nossi-Bé, because of the bright blue sea. Of the principal towns, Tananarive, the capital, is by far the largest, with a population of about 400 000; of the other main towns only three reach a population of approximately 50 000. They are Tamatave, Majunga and Fianarantsoa; for the rest, another five towns, their populations range from 30 000 downward to a mere 10 000, but 80% of the population live in villages of less than 2000 inhabitants.

The people of course form with the country an indivisible whole; one obviously cannot study one without studying the other. Madagascar, the origin and meaning of the name is unknown : the nearest one can get to an explanation is - the home of the Madecasswe, or Malgaches. In the old days the Arabs called the area the island of the Moon, "L'Ile de la Lune"; the Europeans called it successively "Ile St. Laurent", "Ile Dauphine", "The Red Island", "Lemuria" and "The Great Island" - today it remains Madagascar, the Republic of Malagasy, and the people are : the Malagasies, or mainly for the French "les Malgaches".

Officially, the Portuguese discovered the island at the beginning of the 15th century, at about the same time as Mauritius, but it is well known and accepted that the Arabs and a few emigrants from the regions of Indonesia had reached the shores of the Great Island long before the Christian era. The population of the island is basically Indonesian; it mixed over the centuries with the Arabs and Bantus, and gradually, after the XVth century when larger waves of immigrants arrived from Indonesia, they absorbed the earlier inhabitants of the land and among them the Vasimbaz, a Bantu tribe from Southern Africa. On this trunk, on this principal branch came to be grafted the emigrants from Borneo, Sumatra and Malaya, and from the North more Arabs and Persians. There occurred a considerable dispersal of tribes, which exploded into a mosaic of kingdoms, most of them loosely organised; small, weak and insecure tribal units beset by internal and external conflicts. But as always, to every rule an exception : the exceptional state was Imerina.

This state was founded by a people later called the Merinas who were of predominantly Malayo-Indonesian origin and gradually, they succeeded in establishing their ascendancy over neighbouring tribes, and finally, toward the late eighteenth century they became united under the leadership of Andrianampoinerina. Malagasy names are such tongue twisters, yet the last syllable is not pronounced : Ranavalona is Ranavalao, Tsiranana is Tsirano. Andrianampoinerina was a remarkable prince who set up his capital at Tananarive and consolidated his rule over the Merina tribes, which means all the peoples of the plateaus, but not the Côtiers, Coasters, who always throughout, escaped the rule of the Merina.

This king wielded an undisputed but paternalistic authority; he organised, built, ruled his vassal chiefs and exhorted his subjects to work. During his reign, Merina Society became organised, the nobility (andriana), the freemen (hova), a name erroneously but generally applied to the Merinas, but which, in fact, only describes the middle class or bourgeoisie, and the slaves (andevo), of which there were a number of categories; for instance, those who were enslaved temporarily because of unpaid debts; those who refused to do voluntary work; those who were captured in battle. But the Vasimbasy, the Bantu tribe, perhaps the earliest settlers, were not slaves and to this day, they inspire a prestigious respect, and their burial places have become shrines visited on ceremonial occasions.

It would be of interest to describe in some detail this extraordinary often savage era of Merina rule, 1787 to 1896, but unfortunately, time does not allow, so I shall simply mention that after this great founder king - two kings and three queens ruled Imerina - over the hundred odd years of their sovereignty their main object was to conquer the whole country which they never achieved; they developed a not unjustified distrust of all foreigners and western concepts; in their efforts to preserve Independence, they played off France against England, but finally lost out to the horse trading of the two colonial powers. They maintained a balance between ancestral superstitions and the Christian faith.<sup>+</sup> Some extraordinary characters emerged during this period. The most picturesque undoubtedly was the Frenchman Laborde, a blacksmith of unusual talents, who gained the favour of Ranavalona I, the first of the queens; he undertook successfully a sort of one man industrial development, became tutor of the prince Rakoto and later consul for France - he was finally the direct cause of the war that led to the protectorate and in the end the overthrow of Imerina by France. During this period France had no foothold on Madagascar itself, but it held the two islands Nosy-Bé and Ste Marie since the middle of the 18th century.

Perhaps we should pause to consider the people and the position of the country on the eve of French administration.

The population approximately at the time : two and a half million, a surprisingly low figure for a people by nature prolific. The reasons have been sought and they show that certain superstitions or taboos had a marked effect on the population growth. The taboos required for instance that children be left naked from birth to the age of seven. The custom of the ordalies by poison commonly used to extract a confession or an evil power; add to that the fights between tribes, the carrying off of slaves. These unbelievable ordeals kept the population to a minimal figure.

The people are farmers, herders, wood cutters or fishermen. They work enough to feed themselves, their needs are not great, they are generally docile and indolent - they have a veneration for the ox or zebu, which is considered more or less sacred and constitutes their wealth, their savings. Their diet is mainly rice, and its cultivation and gathering are preceded and followed by numerous ceremonies. The people make a coarse material from certain plants; they are good blacksmiths and have worked iron for many years; the missions taught them to make lace and wicker articles.

I shall not attempt to make an inventory at the turn of the century, when the French took over. So as, however, to fix a picture : transport was on foot or by canoe, goods were transported mainly by a contraption made of bamboo, called bourjane, similar to the Chinese shoulder pole with the load on either end; ox-drawn carts have only a limited use because the paths were not wide enough; the

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<sup>+</sup> The Merinas were finally converted by English missionaries to the Protestant faith and the Protestant Church became the official church of Imerina.

sedan chair is still in use. Infrastructure, one can say, was non-existent.

The French occupation lasted sixty years in round figures. I think, the French did quite a bit, not a lot, not nearly enough. If we compare the French effort in Algeria, what they did in Madagascar is pathetically little; true, Algeria was just the other side of the Mediterranean and Madagascar is 10 000 kilometres away by the shortest route; more than a million Frenchmen settled in Algeria and never more than 50 000 came to Madagascar. Yet France started off in the best possible manner; they sent Gallieni whose programme was based on two principles : "la politique des races" - all ethnic groups in a colony were to be governed by their own leader. "La politique de la tâche d'huile" - the automatic radiation of influence from a given military and administrative centre. He immediately ran into two revolts. They were both put down and in fact, they accelerated the final conquest of all Imerina; he then turned to the Sakalava unrest and finally sent Lyauthey to pacify the South. At the turn of the century, within four years, Gallieni with 9000 men had entirely pacified Madagascar and troops were gradually withdrawn.

He was then free to apply his policy of the races and to exercise his power through the hereditary chiefs of each population group. He got down to further sap English influence, break the power and the pride of the Merina and finally he tried not entirely successfully to reconcile French economic interests with his sincere humanitarian zeal to promote the welfare of the Malagasys. He left Madagascar in 1905; there is probably no aspect of the island's development on which the famous soldier did not leave his mark; to most of the Malagasys, to this day, Gallieni appears to be the great king of their islands.

No less than twenty generals, governors, were to administer the island in the fifty-five years between Gallieni's departure and Independence in 1960 ... if only there had been more Gallienis among them ... However, France did some very necessary cleaning up : slavery was abolished and some of the most cruel fadies or taboos were stamped out, roads were made, railways were laid, harbours were dug, schools and hospitals were built, leprosy, malaria, tuberculosis were efficiently dealt with, the recurrent plague epidemics were eradicated and agriculture was organised and enormously extended; the island became entirely self-sufficient in food stuffs; a start was made on industry; everyone learnt French.

It isn't easy to crisply summarise what is in the mind of the Malagasies with regard to this period of sixty years of French occupation.

The wars, in my opinion, do not provide a worth while barometer : in 14/18, Madagascar sent to the front one hundred thousand soldiers and voluntary workers. In 1939/40, France, defeated, hopelessly weakened and occupied, the Malagasy stuck by her - from this, many have concluded in France that these people have a great love for the French; yet, in 1947, there occurred the last, the worst and most savage revolt of its kind against French authority; it is thought that more than 70 000 lost their lives; some in the revolt and many more in the violent repression which followed. Many Frenchmen were put through the saw mills and many Malagasys were killed in the fighting, and more perished in the forests where they had fled.

A better reading of present day Malagasy feeling leads me to the following remarks:

The opinions among them run from outright genuine praise to virulent criticism; perhaps one can say that the elite recognise that France brought law and order, and peace to the island, that she did bring a measure of improvement to the conditions of life of the Malagasy and made a start in developing the resources of the country. At the other extreme, the opinion is held that in 1900 the Malagasy

were unjustly deprived of their independence and that for sixty years they were enslaved in the twentieth century by colonial economic exploitation.

Somewhere, there, between these two views, are probably the true thoughts of the average Malagasy, with the majority closer, in various degrees, to praise than to criticism. On this particular aspect it is important to remember that in the Seventies the vast majority of the men at the levers of command in every field have been educated and formed in French academies and institutions, and according to French ideas and philosophy. In fact, it is certainly true to say that France did give an impulse toward intellectual talent and in the last analysis, many of the men who are now coming to the fore, would never have emerged without the French. I am not an apologist for the colonial era and I will not hang my head in shame for the sins or shortcomings of the colonial powers, because among many other achievements I am of opinion that if Africa is to produce its Gallienis, Cecil Rhodes, Lyautheys and Clives, it will owe it, in great measure, to the guidance given by those very powers.

In 1960, Madagascar recovered its independence under the majestic shadow of De Gaulle who encouraged Tsirane to lead the newly independent state - Tsirane, a man in his sixties, has been President of Madagascar since 1960 and still is now; quite a record as newly independent African states go. De Gaulle called Tsirane "Mon ami et compagnon" which made the Merinas shudder - that cõtier, former cattle herdsman and primary school teacher! And so, after many intrigues, after some very real fears of communist success, Independence came in the wake of a country which had recovered suddenly its greatness under a Louis XIV type of splendour, a country which could and did offer a special membership in that exclusive club, the European Economic Community. Tsirane understood the danger for Madagascar, of Independence in isolation, and he therefore linked his country firmly with the western world, and especially with France. And in the philosophy of the western world - democracy is a corner stone word, and it is said that democracy somehow means Government by the numerically strongest elements, and naturally, according to this principle, the Cõtiers, long despised, marched to power.

In fact, Tsirane's leadership could be interpreted as the revenge of the Cõtiers on the Merina, of the Republic over the conquerors, of former slaves over former masters, of Catholics over Protestants.

And so to present times, but before we consider Madagascar/South African relations, we must take a good look at the Malagasys, as they now emerge in the Seventies:

The social unit is the family, in many cases, especially in the country and in the villages, the whole family lives together; whoever is the breadwinner, provides for the whole family - in a family of ten or twelve it is frequent that there is only one person fully employed, others may have temporary or part time jobs or may scratch around - it is more than a custom, it is a rule that he who has the money looks after the family; to transgress this rule, is to incur the disgrace not only of the members of the family, but of society or of the village and may result in the culprit being banished from burial in the family tomb. This is a punishment worse than death. The rich and the powerful do not escape this rule and they often provide a house separate from their own, where they gather all the members of the family and provide for them.

The Malagasy are an extraordinary mobile people; they move about a great deal and constitute a most unstable labour force - they leave their jobs to return home, to attend the numerous family celebrations - their needs are not great and they can almost always procure somehow without much effort nourishment, sufficient clothing and housing. They have shown and still do, an amazing reluctance to training and to regular sustained work. This could have been and was

labelled resistance under Merina rule or French occupation, but under Independence it can no longer be excused.

The Malagasy do not believe in the inevitability of death - to them death is not the natural end of our existence on earth; it is only a passage into a new state, a departure into a world nearby. Death comes through an evil spell or because God is dissatisfied, or because one has offended, consciously or unconsciously, one's ancestors. The dead continue to exist therefore, alongside the living members of the family; they speak to them, give orders and advise mainly by way of dreams. The living will ask for favours from their dead ancestors and they will ask them to intercede for them, because the ancestors gradually with the passage of time, become gods themselves. And so this veneration and respect for the ancestors manifests itself first by a place in the house where their souls will circulate in peace, hence a ground floor devoid of windows where nobody lives, but which one visits frequently to be in contact with the dead. Then the building of a family tomb and according to the tribes, these tombs take numerous forms - they cost a lot of money and many families spend all they have on their tombs, and the greatest sorrow of a Malagasy is to be so poor as to be unable to build a family tomb; some of the more lavish tombs have special rooms for offerings, one brings food to the dead and finally, the dead must be comfortable, and so every few years the whole family gathers and the corpse is taken out of the tomb, paraded around the village, and its shroud is changed. This is the occasion of two days of festivities and again the expense is considerable, especially the entertaining of the numerous friends and guests - the corpse is then returned to the tomb in a much smaller parcel as years go by. The Malagasy believe in a God and they may be protestant or catholic, but this does not interfere with the cult of the ancestors, nor with these queer ceremonies; often the catholic priest or the protestant minister are invited to attend the famadihana, as they are called and which means the turning over of the dead.

Vis-a-vis the Europeans these practices are often carefully concealed, but they still today play a major part in the lives of the people. A Malagasy, in appearance westernised and sophisticated, sometimes having traveled extensively overseas, will still carefully turn over his dead. When President Tsiranane and his ministers tell the people not to spend their meagre resources on these practices and rather devote their money, for instance, to the education of their children or other useful purposes, it is certain that they themselves would not miss the little ritual.

Finally in dealing with the peoples of Madagascar it is important that I mention: the foreign contingent, the alien minorities : 300 000 half-casts - we would call them coloureds - the result of co-habiting Europeans, Indians, Chinese and Malagasy; 30 000 Réunionese, poor Whites from Réunion, French citizens; they were by their interference in politics one of the major causes of the revolt of 1947 and among its main European victims. The Comorians, 45 000, small scale wage earners, mostly Moslems and French citizens. The Chinese, 10 000, anti-communist; many have become French citizens and even catholics; they have monopolised the retail trade in food. Indians, 15 000, successful traders and industrialists, unpopular with the Malagasy, because they dabble in politics and finance political trouble makers; add some Greek traders and Yemenese capable labourers; and finally the French from metropolitan France, about 20 000. Close to half a million so called foreigners, they constitute the most reliable labour force, enterprise and technology.

What then can South Africa draw from a rapprochement with Madagascar and in turn, what can Madagascar hope from such rapprochement?

South Africa - the political benefits are obvious : on the international scene one more friend is certainly not negligible, especially when that friend is not geographically compelled. Strategically, one more fort to strengthen the



existing buttresses is not negligible, especially when that fort can contribute to blocking Russia's goal of pre-eminence in the Indian Ocean. Any move to block possible communist penetration in an area so close in modern terms to South Africa must be a wise move. To create goodwill with any country situated in the Austral Africa area, in view of a closer re-grouping in time, must be good foresight. The opening of a window on the third world, access to African thinking, a further step towards dialogue, and most of all another step towards preserving peace in Africa.

The economics of the operation in the immediate, are certainly not so obvious. The country is poor and as Rabenmanajar, the Minister of External Affairs, made very clear to the Honourable Mr. Muller, Madagascar is very poor and needs financial assistance of considerable size.

For the time being, industrialisation is in its very early stages. Many of the existing industries are, in fact, no more than craft enterprises. The country, as has been shown, is self-sufficient in all its food requirements and over 70% of the island's total industrial output comes from industries producing food stuffs. It is said that the island is rich in mineral wealth; for the time being iron and gold are mined and so is graphite, crystal and mica; research is taking place for diamonds and though prospecting for petroleum is also taking place, no oil has yet been found on the island.

France still takes about 50% of all Madagascar exports and though imports from France have been steadily declining since Independence, mainly due to the devaluations of the Franc and the rise in prices of French goods, the imports from the Franc zone are still of prime importance.

What one will call heavy or big industries are required undoubtedly. The population is now growing quite rapidly, approximately 3% a year; it is now well over six million; steel, cement, glass, chemical industries; by the time the factories get going, there will be a sufficient domestic market.

The difficulties are common to most underdeveloped countries : lack of capital, of a skilled and stable labour force and possibly of managerial talent.

That South Africa has a lot to offer, is undoubted; aid in all fields to improve a hopelessly inadequate infrastructure, technical knowledge in prospecting, developing and mining all types of minerals and in establishing most types of industries. The investments, at least for a start, are not beyond South African possibilities and when the time for the giant projects comes, there are plenty of partners who will be eager to join.

A project, such as the development of Narinda Bay, would call for international cooperation - oil, shipping, engineering, construction and industrial enterprise are involved. The project is the construction on the West coast of a deep sea harbour and dry dock facilities for the maintenance of the line of ships which pass through the Mozambique channel to round the Cape on their way from the Persian Gulf to the markets of the Northern Hemisphere - together with the installation of great industries - glass, cement, chemicals.

The Bay presents protection, shelter, depth and vastness to accommodate the required services for those monsters of modern times. The supertankers and the VLCC's (very large cargo carriers of the 250 000 tons and upwards class). This means, of course, rail, road and air, water, electricity, in fact a complete infrastructure would have to be built from scratch at Narinda, but which undoubtedly is more readily advanced and sooner available on the continent of Africa at Cape Town, or Dakar, though Dakar seems perhaps already too near the great harbour facilities of Europe.

Now cooperation and dialogue do not always mean investment and talk; it sometimes takes the form of understanding and stepping aside. What would your reaction as South Africans be, if you were to hear this prayer, or perhaps the more appropriate word is, this plea?

"This development, this infrastructure, these industries, this unique base in the Southern Hemisphere we need so as to create a new core, a new source of development for our country, help us to create this unit essential to our very survival and the first and indispensable help you can offer is not be creating the same unit at home and which, certainly without undue hardship, you can easily do without".

Now this is an approach, for my part I would say, not unreasonable - perhaps we should go that road and maybe, we find that the country will open to our prospectors and to our entrepreneurs.

And if we are to look further to the Year 2000, the twenty-first century, which, undoubtedly, our children will see, then what do we prefer? - a poor undeveloped island on our doorstep with which we exchange a few raw materials and various semi-processed goods. Or an island highly industrialised with which we will exchange finished products of high technical quality - a neighbour with whom we can reach the position as exists today between the United States and Japan. And ... and if we don't move, who knows what type of neighbour we might end up with in the Year 2000 and perhaps long before ...

I have nearly finished, but I feel that I must make one constructive suggestion. I have tried to show as fairly as I was able, the present relationship between the Malagasies and the French; I would like to, for an instant, widen the issue : France has remained an African power and an Indian Ocean power; de Gaulle enjoyed in Africa an enormous prestige and Pompidou has inherited much of it, as was shown during his recent trip through West Africa. France's policy in Africa is today that both Black and White communicate and cooperate; France can offer a most efficient link between the French speaking African territories and South Africa. As a matter of fact, there might well be a good case to nominate an ambassador for Africa, and if to begin with, he must dialogue with the Houphouet-Boignys, the Bokassas and the Tsiranes, then South Africa would do well to choose to station him in Paris.

And to come back to Madagascar, my suggestion is consultation and perhaps even common action with France; the French know the ways, the customs, the reactions of the Malagasies and they speak their language. The French too can be of considerable assistance in countering that dangerous conception of the uninitiated - South Africa is taking over Madagascar. And finally, when all is said, matters of importance are discussed in Paris and that goes for thirteen other independent African countries.

Perhaps I should have put things in more appropriate order - Nossi-Bé; the completing of an international class airport, roads and finally, the building of a palace hotel with casino on a beach of palm trees and golden sands. This is the first South African venture in Madagascar and it is well on its way - investment approximately 4 million Rands for both infrastructure and hotel/casino.

In time, you will go to Nossi-Bé; there, in a Hawaiian type décor, you will enjoy the pleasure of a sea, the colour of gin and tonic, and you will watch a million fishes dance a most colourful ballet against a sea bed of fantastic beauty. You will visit numerous lovely islands, some only inhabited by the peculiar lemures which are monkeys with the head of a fox, and in the evening you will stroll among the palms under a romantic moon, or you will be caught up in a combination of Las Vegas, a München beer hall and Monte Carlo. This venture will bring much needed hard currency to the country and in the package tours that will be organised, men from the world over will discover the island

and will consider the opportunities that it offers.

We haven't talked much of race and apartheid - Tsirane has said with disarming sincerity: "Come see how we live, in harmony, a mixture of races and tribes and colours; you shall recognise in our society the Asian and the African, the Indian and the Chinese, the Arab and the European - we sit around the table together. Nothing would please me more than to see your boys from South Africa dancing in front of me with my beautiful girls from Madagascar" - dream or nightmare, symbol, fantasy or realism.

Whether it is Nossi-Bé and its tourists, Narinda and its huge industrial complex of the future, Tananarive and tomorrow its air of an international metropolis, unity and inspiration are necessary in the rapprochement and let us beware we do not let the opportunity escape, let us not fumble, the chance may not come around again.

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D I S C U S S I O N

(Transcription from tape-recording of the discussion)

Question: Could Mr. Banmeyer please comment on the problem of succession? The President is in poor health and his strong Minister of the Interior, Mr. Resampa, has recently been demoted. What is Mr. Banmeyer's opinion about the problem of succession and with it the problem of maintaining political stability?

Answer: President Tsirane is only 60 years old, and it has been said that he is in poor health, but he does not appear to me to be that ailing. There are three Vice-Presidents and it is impossible to say today how a succession would go. I think that President Tsirane will want to nominate his successor. Probably the most able of the men around him is Rabemananjara, but there is no certainty at this stage.

I would just like to add that it would be very unfortunate if Tsirane disappeared. He is a good man, well liked even among the aristocratic Merinas, and respected throughout the island, but often criticised, and at this stage, there is quite some criticism based on his attitude toward South Africa. If Tsirane were to disappear we would certainly lose a good friend.

Q: I recently read a publication which referred to the recent revolt and which gave the impression to the reader that there was quite a lot of political dissatisfaction in Madagascar and that Tsirane was really keeping the lid on this situation with something like strong-arm methods. I would like to hear what Mr. Banmeyer has to say about that.

A: There was a revolt in the South a little more than a month ago. This revolt was pinned onto Communist Chinese activity in the South. There may be some Communist Chinese influence, but from my information the people in the South have suffered a few years of severe drought, they have lost many of their cattle, and they are cattle people in the South, and a heavy tax was imposed on cattle. It was felt in the South that that tax did not take into account their difficult, nearly desperate, position. The revolt which cost 30 lives, and which was put down very strongly, is in the view of many in Madagascar the result mainly of this difficult situation of the people in that area, as well as the aggravating tax which was imposed upon them.

Q: I would like to know what are the trade possibilities between Madagascar and South Africa, particularly the export situation for secondary industry, in view of the fact that Madagascar is associated with the EEC.

A: I am not sure that I can answer your question fully. Madagascar is a buyer of practically everything except foodstuffs. Most of the imports come from France, but they do not buy very much, because the development of the country has been slow. Therefore, apart from articles of common consumption, there are not great needs in Madagascar for imports at this stage of development. As the development is accelerated then the needs will grow.

I do not think that the fact that Madagascar is associated with the EEC has any major effect on its imports. On the export side, what does it export? It exports a little rice, a little coffee, a little sugar, vanilla, a few perfume essences. That is about it. I think that the whole structure has got to be wound up, and then we will probably find whether Madagascar being an associate partner in the EEC has any effect. I do not think it has any for the time being. It is too small.

Q: Would Mr. Banmeyer please comment on two matters. The first is on the revolt to which he has already referred, and I wish to ask if the geographic position of the south west of Madagascar would have had any effect on the revolt. The other matter in connection with the revolt is whether the racial position would have had any effect, because the south west of Madagascar contains the population which is most negroid in character and also in culture as compared with the Hovas who live on the plateau. That is the one question.

The other is: Has there been any contact between Madagascar and Asia? As Mr. Banmeyer pointed out, in the past there was great contact between the Indonesian islands and Madagascar, but to the best of my knowledge the only time or occasion recently when there has been a restimulation of this link, was the time of confrontation between Malaysia and Indonesia in 1961, when Sukarno had some idea about mixing Madagascar into his new Indonesian Republic.

A: Well, this is quite a question! The South of the island is the area which is the poorest and the least populated. Throughout the South and along the coast, mainly along the west coast, you have the so-called common people. Now when I say the common people, I mean the Côtiers, as opposed to the so-called elite of the plateaus. Most of the ministers today are Côtiers. Now these are the people who issue from all the groups including the slaves, the Bantu and the Arabs - they are a very great mixture. I do not think that there are more negroids in the south than there are in the north. In the north you have a lot of Indians, especially around Majunga and Diego Suarez. But throughout the rest of the island you have a considerable mixture, and I do not think that one could say that the south is more negroid than the north.

The contacts with Indonesia I think have practically ceased. The contacts with India continue to some extent. The contacts with the Arab countries still exist. You have special services that take the Moslems to Mecca, for instance.

Q: In Madagascar with its varying population groups, social apartheid is perhaps very well understood. The Highlanders, looking down as they do on the Coastal people of Bantu origin, think that they fully understand apartheid as applied to the Bantu in South Africa and in a way approve it. It is terribly difficult for someone inviting them to visit South Africa to put out the warning note as to what our legalised and traditional apartheid amounts to, and that while their hosts can protect them 95 per cent of the time they may inevitably come up against untoward events. It is difficult for senior Malagasy officials in charge of big departments of State in a country twice the size of the United Kingdom, with cars and aeroplanes at their disposal, to appreciate this, but it seems necessary that they should be warned.

A: Yes, it is true that in these countries there is a good understanding of a kind of apartheid, but it is not the apartheid that we know here. It is the apartheid of classes, which exists also in France, England and in most countries in the world. The Merinas have a strong disdain for the Côtiers, for instance. I have of course spoken with people, Ministers and others in Madagascar, and what you have alluded to, they fear considerably. They fear the position they would be confronted with, if they came to South Africa. It is for us, therefore, to try to explain to them and to try to protect them against any possible unpleasantness.

I would like to give an example. When the doctors from Gabon came to visit South Africa, following the visit of Dr. Chris Barnard and Dr. Jack Penn to Gabon. They were French speaking, and we were careful to be with them all the time. Now the only reason for being with them all the time was to avoid embarrassment, should someone do something silly. So at the beginning this is what we are going to have to do. If we want these people to feel at home, we are going to have to give them a certain amount of comfort by our very

presence. It is unfortunate to have to say it, but we are going to have to do it.

Q: Perhaps Mr. Banmeyer would care to comment on the military situation in Madagascar.

A: I am sorry, I cannot. I know very little about the military. I know that the General who is at the head of the forces, who is a very fine man, was a superior officer in the French army and was brought to Madagascar. Tsirane is Commander of the armed forces. Frankly I would have to guess, as I really do not know what the military situation is.

Q: I wish to invite some comment on the relationship of Madagascar to the OAU. Then, further, on the question of apartheid, I wonder whether in Madagascar there are not any groups which regard apartheid not as a form of stratification or of class differences, but as a form of naked racialism? This is the impression which is very widespread outside South Africa, and I am wondering if this is not a potential source of discord amongst the people in Madagascar.

A: To the second question, the answer is in the affirmative. There are obviously a lot of people in Madagascar that consider apartheid as an insult. There is no doubt about it. On the other hand, there are those who are convinced that they can persuade us South Africans, on a new way and a new system outside of apartheid. My remark about Pres. Tsirane, where he says that he would like to see boys from South Africa dancing with the girls from Madagascar, is not a cynical remark. You will speak to very intelligent people who will say: Let the South Africans come here and let them see how we live. And they are convinced that we will be so impressed, that we will go their way, perhaps not the whole way, but that we will change our apartheid ideology. This is something that is very difficult to discuss with Malagasies.

Now coming to the other point, the influence in the OAU of Madagascar is quite considerable. Men such as Rabemananjara or Tsirane have quite some influence on the group of French-speaking African countries. Houphouet-Boigny is considered to be the leader in Francophone Africa certainly among most of the West African states, and Houphouet-Boigny certainly relies a lot on Tsirane. They consult with others, such as Senghor (up to a point), Bokassa, Bongo. They form a sort of bloc against the Kaundas and Nyereres. Many of them are in favour of dialogue, but I am afraid that their idea of dialogue is quite far removed from our South African idea of dialogue. I think we will have to reach a moment of truth when we will have to explain really what we mean by dialogue and find out what they mean; perhaps then we will get somewhere.

Q: Mr. Banmeyer told us something about the population and said that there were 15,000 Indians in Madagascar. I would like to ask whether this very low number of Indians is the result of some resistance to Indian immigration, because of some political activity that may have developed. I ask this question in the knowledge that Mauritius, an hour and a half away by plane, has 80,000 Indians.

A: It is an excellent question. There has been the same resistance to the penetration of Indians in Madagascar, as there has been in South Africa. The Indians of Madagascar have no passports. I will give you an example. I was on a plane recently flying from Majunga to Dar-es-Salaam. The Indians as well as the other passengers had to fill in an immigration form in English. A young textile student, an Indian, who was sitting next to me, asked whether I could help him, which I did. I then filled in perhaps thirty forms, for the Indians who were travelling on this plane, and did not understand English. All were travelling on a special permit, they were all stateless and held no passport.

Q: I would like to ask about the difference in attitude between people in South Africa (I am a foreigner), and people in the Ivory Coast or Madagascar towards this famous dialogue business. Could you please tell us which you think would be the subjects Houphouet-Boigny, Bongo, and Tsirane would propose to deal with during this dialogue with South Africa?

A: I think that as South Africans, we want to get nearer to the independent states of Africa. We want to show that our attitude is one of co-operation, that we have a lot to offer in technology, finance, general health services, etc., to countries that are not as developed, not as forward industrially as we are. South Africans feel, I think, that this would be a good move towards a better understanding in Africa, towards preserving the peace in Africa, towards assisting certain occidental countries who have to carry the major burdens, financial and other, such as Britain and France. So South Africa is going to offer aid, not gifts, and see whether she cannot help to guide, to invest, and to put to better use the resources of the countries.

On the other side, the Bongos, Tsiranes, and Houphouet-Boignys think that they are going to be able to negotiate: We accept dialogue, they will say, but you have to change this and that in your country. This is what they think. Now someone has got to fill this gap, someone has got to bring the two views together. And this is where I say that those who know these people well, can act as agents. For instance, an agent will act as a link between seller and buyer; he will get the buyer to pay a little more and the seller to take a little less, and he will sometimes thus do business. This is exactly what the French can do with these countries, and it can help a great deal.

Q: Mr. Banmeyer has made the interesting point that France is in the position of an agent to effect a compromise. What do you think might be this compromise? I think it is clearly understandable that there might be some kind of compromise, but I would like to know about the details, because the ideas that South Africa have and the ideas the Black African leaders have, seem to be diametrically opposed.

A: I would not like you to think that I put this question of France being an agent on a mercantile type of basis. I am just saying that France can help, and by giving an idea of how, by using a parallel example:

I agree that the parties appear to have views diametrically opposed. I think that it is for people of the younger generation, gradually to get such views to become closer. We can help, we can go along, we can advise, but in the future it is going to be the younger generations who will be able to influence the policies of their country, so that there will be changes and those changes will gradually lessen that very wide gap between the different ideas or ideologies.

Q: I would like to comment that it is already a great step forward that black and white sit together, no matter what they discuss.

A: Hear, hear!

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V O T E       O F       T H A N K S

Michael Louw (Smuts Professor of International Relations)

It is indeed a pleasure for me to propose this vote of thanks, mainly because, after a life-time of professional studies of politicians and politics - sometimes a rather dreary subject - it was very refreshing tonight to hear an exposition of a political innocent, but a business sophisticated. It was remarkable to see how Mr. Banmeyer succeeded in mentioning the important things and diplomatically lessening the emphasis on the unimportant things, about which we sometimes have such serious and never-ending debates. Perhaps we should change our old statement that trade follows the flag to the flag follows trade. Nowadays Mr. Ford can speak to the Prime Minister of England very sharply. I have learnt to respect the realistic approach of the businessman, especially in political matters. After all, he is in the game to make money. Politicians might be in the game to make history - and perhaps problems for some of us - but the businessman has to be perceptive, to see things in a special light, and to weigh and evaluate things according to their importance in cold realistic terms.

Now I notice, too, that Mr. Banmeyer was very effective in the presentation of the basic information which we need to understand a country, namely the history, the geography, the physical features, the customs of the people, and, of course, he did not side-step the matter of attitudes. This, we all agree, is the key to any future understanding or talks about talks. When we get to any form of dialogue, attitudes are important. I would like to say, however, that here I feel we can take the long view. After all, attitudes are usually mass attitudes, and leaders and elites play an extremely important role to form attitudes, to shape them to change them. But this takes time. I remember, when I was younger, when I was a student, I also believed in instant utopia - I wanted to believe in tomorrow. But when we deal with these things, we have to take the long view. And we have to remember that changes in the attitudes of masses require a very special form of leadership, and it requires elites which perceive their roles accurately and effectively. In this, too, we can certainly use the assistance of a well-meaning intermediary and I am very glad that Mr. Banmeyer mentioned the special role which France could play, regarding the Francophone states, including, of course, Madagascar. The French point of view is probably a unique one in the sense that in it the realistic approach is emphasised a little more than the ideological one. We can perhaps reach a better understanding by looking at those things on which we can discover agreement rather than at those things which obviously divide us.

Now I would like to assure Mr. Banmeyer, that he has had, in his role as a protagonist and advocate for Madagascar tonight, a very receptive audience. There are many of us who are very well disposed towards closer understanding with Madagascar. After all, the President and his Foreign Minister took great political risks in going out on a limb to show that they believe in some form of understanding with South Africa. Therefore I think there has been a reciprocal feeling among many people whom I know personally regarding Madagascar. There is very definitely a goodwill which has been created, and out of which something very positive may grow in the future.

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