

BOOK REVIEW

AFRICA . . .
The Lion Awakes

Africa—the Lion Awakes, by Jack Woddis. Published by Lawrence & Wishart, London.

In *Africa—the Lion Awakes*, Jack Woddis completes the analysis he commenced in *Africa—the Roots of Revolt*.

In the first volume “an attempt was made”, he writes, “to explain why the African people are now in such powerful revolt against colonialism”. The present volume is largely devoted to an examination of how the African people have conducted their struggles.

Together these two volumes provide an invaluable Marxist analysis of the main economic and political trends in most of the countries and territories of Africa.

In *Africa—the Lion Awakes* Woddis presents a careful and cogent analysis, amply supported by statistics, of the struggle of the African people for liberation. At the same time he exposes the tactics of the colonial powers in their efforts to retain their grip on Africa.

The first chapter contains a brief but excellent analysis of the changing content of the African liberation struggle since 1885. Woddis identifies four different stages of this struggle. The *first phase* was the armed resistance of the African people to the military conquest of Africa by the imperial powers which began in earnest with the “scramble for Africa” in approximately 1885. With the conquest of the various territories by the colonial powers, the struggle entered its *second phase*—the resistance to and protests against the effects of foreign rule, with land and taxation forming the central issues. In this phase begins the formation of political and national organisations.

The struggles of the African people to win reforms from the colonial powers within the context of colonialism developed gradually into a fight for the ending of colonialism itself. This *third phase*—the struggle for national independence—entered its most intense stage after the second world war. As Woddis states, “the period

from 1945 to 1960 can be characterised as one in which the working class, organised into trade unions, advances to a central position in the national movement; political organisations acquire a mass character and are no longer confined to the most advanced territories, but spring up everywhere; the people pass decisively from defensive protest actions against the effects of imperialist rule to the open challenge to colonial domination itself, to the demand for political power; the tide of anti-imperialist revolt engulfs the whole continent and direct colonial rule is swept away in most of Africa”.

The *fourth phase* of the struggle was entered into in 1960 in those countries which had won political independence. This phase is characterised by the efforts to consolidate and defend the newly won political independence and to complete the national democratic revolutions.

This book is devoted in the first place to an analysis of the role of the trade union organisations in the third phase of the struggle, and the attempts of the imperial powers to stem the tide of national liberation during this phase and in the second place to an analysis of the techniques adopted by these powers, in the fourth phase, to maintain their interest in Africa notwithstanding the achievement of political independence.

Woddis shows in detail the importance of the role played by the trade union movement in the struggle for national independence. While recognising that this struggle was not based solely on the working class, his analysis nevertheless indicates that it was the struggles of the trade unions which gave the national liberation movements their greatest impetus and direction.

Until 1935 throughout Africa the trade unions were repressed by the colonial powers, but as the result of the struggles of the working people and the developments occasioned by the second world war, the unions finally gained recognition. Immediately, the ruling powers adapted their tactics to the new situation. Every effort was made to obtain control of the trade unions by appointing “advisors”; by legislative measures which compelled registration of the trade unions, limited the right to strike, imposed heavy penalties for “illegal strikes” and prohibited unions from participating in political activities. Company unions were cultivated and attempts were made to break the militancy of the unions by encouraging rifts between black and white workers, fostering tribalism, encouraging “Moral Rearmament” and attempting to “buy off” sections of the workers by allowing some to advance to positions in skilled work.

Woddis analyses these techniques and shows how they were

designed to prevent the linking of the trade union movement with the national struggle for independence and to prevent the breakdown of the cheap labour system. Notwithstanding these measures, however, the militant struggles of the workers continued. Strikes were frequent and widespread, as Woddis shows in his detailed statistics, and the unions were inevitably drawn into the anti-imperialist struggle, which was raised to new and more militant levels by these activities.

The culmination of these struggles was the formal granting of independence to numerous former colonial territories by the metropolitan powers. Having been forced to concede political independence to the colonial territories, the imperialist powers began implementing further measures designed to maintain their grip over their former colonies. Just as the colonial powers, having been forced to concede trade union rights, attempted to control the unions, so too, having been forced to grant political independence, these powers now attempted to control the new independent states. Various techniques have been and are being used by the colonial powers to achieve this end.

In the first place, although previously the colonial powers had attempted to prevent the growth of a national bourgeoisie, they now encourage such a development and attempt to find from amongst the emergent bourgeoisie "reliable" leaders to run the Government. Alternatively, all types of schemes of "gradual development", modified franchises, the removal of the so-called colour-bar pinpricks and such like are utilised. However, because of the difficulty of retaining any form of effective control through either reliable leaders or through such reformist schemes, the imperial powers have resorted to two tactics in particular to retain control of their former colonies in order to protect their interests.

The first is the establishment of massive military bases in various parts of Africa which enable these powers to maintain armies in close proximity to, or in their former colonies. Secondly, the great monopolies continue to invest global amounts in the liberated countries with the effect of maintaining an economic hold on them. For example, the Shell company has investments totalling sixteen million pounds in Nigeria, France has invested five hundred million in the Sahara in regard to certain oil schemes, while the United States, which had invested three hundred and thirteen million dollars in Africa in 1950, had by 1959 invested two thousand million dollars.

To meet these threats to their independence the newly independent countries are concerned particularly to build modern industry, to nationalise such industries as already exist which are owned by foreign monopolists, and to limit the profits and restrict the export of capital by the foreign monopolies.

Woddis' analysis reveals the continuous and major defeats suffered by imperialism in the face of the advancing struggle of the African people for national liberation and independence and confirms once again that the days of colonialism, racialism and oppression in Africa are numbered.

Africa—the Lion Awakes is not without its faults. The statistical material could have been presented in a more organised and accessible manner and insufficient attention has been paid to the political and national organisations.

But these are minor defects. Jack Woddis has written a book of great value to all who are interested in and who are working for African freedom.

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