

New Nations Assure Religion Freedom

(The following article was written by a veteran N.C.W.C. News Service correspondent after a trip to Africa that took him to the Sudan, Uganda, Belgian Congo, Angola, Ghana and Nigeria.)

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New flags flutter in the warm winds of Africa and still newer flags are being born.

At least one new state is born in Africa every year.

Of the 10 self-governing states in Africa now, five gained or regained their independence in the last three years.

This month in Accra, Ghana, an African "People's Conference" met to promote independence movements, already strong in most of Africa.

THE CATHOLIC Church, long a part of African life, urges that political rights be denied to Africans. Through no less a spokesman than the late Pope Pius XII, the Church has called on colonial powers to give "fair and progressive political freedom" to African peoples.

When a new African state is created with practically no traditions of democratic government, there is a natural danger of abuse. Constitutions, rights may be violated by those in power.

The lawful opposition may not be given a fair hearing. The temptation to corruption is great.

People in Western countries, where politicians and bureaucrats often offend with far less extenuating circumstances, must be temperate in criticizing new governments in Africa.

Most of Africa's new leaders show respect for the Church and for the rights of their Catholic fellow-citizens. Many of these leaders received their early education in Christian schools. Some are Catholics, some Protestants.

Efforts have been made in

some African countries to impose restrictions on all Christian bodies in the field of education.

These efforts have culminated in wholesale violations of previously-recognized rights in two African countries, the Republic of the Sudan and the Union of South Africa. In the Sudan the Muslim part of the population (from 50 to 60 per cent) is dominant in the government. In South Africa the "Apartheid" White colonialists of Dutch Calvinist extraction are responsible.

In other African countries, proposals to restrict Catholic education seem to have originated not with Africans but with British and Belgian colonial governments.

One hears some striking tributes to new African rulers.

Nigeria, now due to become independent on October 1, 1960, has already a large measure of internal self-government. Speaking of his archdiocese of Lagos, the federal capital, Archbishop Leo Taylor, S.M.A., said: "The Church has fared better since self-government came. I do not believe it will be any worse under full independence."

In Oritsha, Nigeria's other Archbishop, Most Rev. Charles Heery, C.S.S.P., told me: "We are no worse off under the African government than we were under British colonial rule."

Some of the main features of the new states and independence movements in Africa are the following:

The typical African leader today belongs to the small, educated minority. He has received a European-style education in Africa. He may also have attended a university in London, Paris or Brussels — less often, an American university.

He preserves some African traditions, wears African dress on ceremonial occasions. But as a rule he wears European clothes, gives receptions in the Western style, reads European and American books and magazines.

As a student or a young agitator, he may have flirted with communism. Now he wants no communism in his immediate surroundings. He knows that it would destroy him.

The political parties follow Western patterns, in broad outlines. The governments are based on a democratic system, with a popularly elected parliament or legislative assembly.

The great majority of the people have little or no education. They are intelligent, however, and no politician can afford to flout public opinion.

Tribal chiefs can influence voters strongly, but the actual voting process is usually free and secret. Muslim rulers do not allow women to vote.

In foreign policy the trend of the new African states is towards neutralism, or what one might call "Nehru" trailism.

Many of the new African leaders will wish to keep some ties with Britain, France or Belgium. They realize that the commercial and personal relations continued through these ties may be useful.

"We do not intend to leave the British Commonwealth," a Ghana minister in Ghana told me. "It is useful to us and we have nothing to lose by staying in it."

At the same time he made it clear that he and at least some of his colleagues, with no opposition from Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, want Ghana to declare itself a republic within the Commonwealth.

Today's African leaders wish to improve the economy and to change the social structure of their countries by developing industries. They know that the necessary capital, equipment and many of the technicians must come from outside Africa.

They seek aid and loans in Europe, America and Asia, but they shy away from conditions that seem to entangle them.

The new and emerging African states have tribal problems. It is not easy to engraft a modern Western-style on an African people. Formerly they had their tribal governments under chiefs and local kings. These traditional rulers cannot be set aside overnight.

Nor can differences between tribes be solved by a proclamation of national independence. Far more difficult to achieve would be any effective federal union of African states.

The boundaries of these new states are often unreal. They are just what European powers carved out to suit their own convenience. Sometimes they were carved out with callous disregard of tribal and language unity.

That happened, for instance, when the British and French governments split each of the former German-ruled territories of Togoland and the Cameroons between them, after World War

The West needs Africa. Africa needs the West and both of them need Christianity. The West would be benefiting itself as well as Africa and Asia by applying Christian principles to all its dealings with the new African states.



Tanganyika — (RNS) — After a long weary hike on a mission to the poor people of Africa, a White Father retreats to gentle amusement at the efforts of his small "helper" to remove a painful blister. The White Fathers are bound by an oath engaging them to labor for the conversion of Africa.

Formosa Legion Of Mary Links Clergy, Laity

Taipei — (NC) — The largest lay organization on Formosa, the Legion of Mary, has been credited by many missionaries as the most effective way to obtain permanent participation of the laity in the work of the clergy.

There are more than 1,000 active members of the legion, according to Sister Agnes Orlebar, who has been the Legion of Mary envoy to Formosa for the past year.

Her job is to organize, advise and encourage the work of the Legion. She has been successful in leading some 100 Catholics, new converts, catechists and prospective members to the Legion.

According to Archbishop Joseph Kuo of Taipei, the Legion of Mary helps the Church in an organized and systematic way.

Hence I always emphasize the importance and value of the Legion to priests and acknowledge the vast amount of apostolic work performed by the legionaries.

Sister Orlebar explains that some 30 per cent of the active members of her organization are new Catholics baptized within the past five years or so.

She says legion members conduct home visits, work with inmates, Catholics, new converts, catechists and prospective members. They also lead retreats, establish and lead prayer groups, and assist in hospital and homes.

Pope John's Radio Talk To Close Lourdes Year

Vatican City — (NC) — Pope John XXIII will broadcast a special message to Lourdes during the closing ceremony of the centennial year there on February 18, France's feast day of St. Bernadette.

The Vatican Radio said Cardinal Tardini, Vatican Secretary of State, has sent a letter to Bishop Pierre Marie Levesque of Tarbes and Lourdes informing him of the Pope's broadcast plans.

taken here as an indication that Pope John does not plan to travel to Lourdes for the final observance of the 100th anniversary of the Blessed Virgin's apparitions to St. Bernadette Soubirous.

The Lourdes celebration had originally been scheduled to end on February 11, the anniversary of the first apparition. But because that date in 1939 coincided with Ash Wednesday, the closing was recently postponed a week.

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