THE HIGH COMMISSION TERRITORIES

THE RT. HON. HILARY MARQUAND, M.P.

Labour Party spokesman on Commonwealth Relations.

SINCE Sharpeville, certain leaders of the African National Congress have used Bechuanaland as an escape route from the Union to Britain. The Bishop of Johannesburg recently took temporary refuge in Swaziland. These events have, not surprisingly, focussed close attention upon the High Commission Territories.

Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland are all Protectorates under the British Crown. They became such at varying dates before and just after the Boer War, mainly because their inhabitants had appealed to Britain for protection from administration by the Boer Republics. However, in the optimistic atmosphere surrounding the creation of the Union, the Liberal Government's South Africa Act of 1909 referred in its preamble to "the eventual admission into the Union or transfer to the Union of such parts of South Africa as are not originally included therein ".

The rulers and peoples of the Protectorates have never asked for admission, but Union Governments have more than once called for their transfer. The matter was raised in 1919, in 1927, in 1935, in 1937 and in 1938. In 1938, the Neville Chamberlain Government seemed almost ready to agree, but the war intervened. From 1949 onwards the Nationalist Government pressed its claims with renewed vigour, till in April 1954, Sir Winston Churchill felt it necessary to state firmly that:

"There can be no question of Her Majesty's Government agreeing at the present time to the transfer of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland to the Union of South Africa. We are pledged, since the South Africa Act of 1909, not to transfer territories until their inhabitants have been consulted, and until the United Kingdom Parliament has had an opportunity of expressing its views."

That statement was repeated later by Sir Anthony Eden, and repeated again in the House of Commons on 14th April, 1960, by Mr. Alport, the Minister of State for Commonwealth Relations. *There can be no question of transfer at the present time*—that is now clear. However speciously the proposal might be

put as part of a plan for a "self-governing Bantustan", the House of Commons—which has by its historic vote of the 8th April, 1960, publicly condemned the racial policies of the Verwoerd Government—would not accept it.

Yet there is one defect in Sir Winston's declaration. It is the word "consult", which was used in the Schedule of the Act of 1909. It is a word vulnerable to widely varied interpretations of meaning. The Africans of Nyasaland were said to have been 'consulted' before they were forced against their will into Federation. It should be recognised that 'consultation' through meetings with District Commissioners, or by obtaining the consent of tribal chiefs who depend for their livelihood and position upon the colonial power, will no longer do. It has been blown away by the "wind of change". The United Kingdom Government should now plainly tell Sir Edgar Whitehead that Britain's reserved power to protect Africans in Southern Rhodesia must remain until such time as Africans, by a majority, ask for its removal. It should tell the Union Government that the same applies to the three Protectorates now administered by the U.K. High Commissioner.

The High Commissioner is primarily an ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Union Government. As such, it is his duty to maintain the diplomatic courtesies and not to interfere with the policies of the government to which he is accredited. Yet that government pursues within its territories a policy towards non-whites which is radically different from that which he himself should pursue within the immediately adjoining Protectorates.

The British Government has considered whether it should separate these responsibilities of the High Commissioner—have one ambassador and one administrator—but has decided not to do so. As I have never had personal responsibility for this department, I hesitate to say outright that that decision was wrong. What I do say, however, and what I have said in the House of Commons, is that in the present dangerous situation, in which the Union is ruled by 'emergency powers', in which at least four Basuto were killed and 14 injured at Sharpeville, and in which one cannot be sure what further drastic acts may follow, it is essential to strengthen the administration within the territories. Clearly there should be a further considerable delegation of authority to each of the three Commissioners resident in the territories, and their staffs should be strengthened

by secondment of men with experience elsewhere in Africa and with sympathetic understanding of African aspirations.

Union industry derives great benefit from the labour of workers, mainly men, from the Protectorates. Mr. Fenner Brockway, M.P., recently estimated their number at 180,000. Remittances by these workers to their families, and the proceeds of the sale of many Protectorate products in the Union, are naturally of value to the territories; but the inevitable consequence is that they have become heavily dependent on the Union. It should be the aim of British policy so to accelerate economic development that that dependence is reduced. We must help these Africans, whom we have promised to protect, to withstand any pressure which may be brought upon them from the home of apartheid. We must help them to build up a healthy and self-reliant society by reducing the need for migration. If and when, at some future date, true democracy comes to prevail in the Union, and if the Protectorate Africans then freely decide to join it, they will be the more welcome if they bring to the new State a prosperous economy. In the meantime, we must seek to make the Protectorates, in Fenner Brockway's words, "models of racial equality and African advance".

The territories vary in their economic potential and their economic needs. Swaziland's natural resources of asbestos and other minerals, together with its fertile soil and good water supply, make it, despite its small size, the most prosperous of these. The Colonial Development Corporation's afforestation project, together with the other farming and sugar-milling projects which it has sponsored, will probably yield immensely valuable results before long. Such developments, with further expansion of industry, offer a very firm foundation for future prosperity. The territory's greatest need is for railway development.

Bechuanaland, containing much desert, is mainly a pastoral country and in recent years has received much help from the Colonial Development Corporation in developing its ranching and beef production. Recently, a prospecting agreement has been made between the Bamangwato tribe and Rhodesian Selection Trust. Some progress has been registered, but this is still a poor country.

Poorer still is Basutoland, from which many thousands of workers have to seek work in the Union. It is a mountainous

country on which sheep can successfully be raised, but the cultivable areas are overcrowded and suffer heavily from the greatest enemy of underdeveloped countries—soil erosion.

It would be unjust to say that no efforts at economic development have been made in recent years. Nevertheless, achievements so far do not match the needs of this so critical time. Fortunately, a comprehensive economic survey has just been completed under the chairmanship of Professor Chandler Morse, of Cornell University, who was nominated by the World Bank. Now that the Bank has new powers, giving it wider scope to help poor countries than it has had hitherto, there is hope that it will be ready to follow up with vigour whatever Professor Morse has proposed. His report is expected by the end of June. My colleagues and I have every intention of asking our own government at once what action they intend taking over it.

Economic development can never go forward effectively without the active co-operation of the people. The people must be informed about the broad objectives of the plan and its detailed application to their neighbourhoods. Their enthusiasm must be enlisted by giving them a feeling of active participation. If this is to be achieved in the Protectorates, two great advances must be made—one in education and one in democracy.

On the whole (thanks very largely to missionaries) the children of the Protectorates have—in comparison with other African countries—fairly good opportunities for primary education. The immediately pressing need is an extension of higher education, so that not only can administrators of development be trained, but also teachers to man the secondary schools. And these schools should be open to children of all races. Here again a valuable report by Professor Lewis, of the University of London, is at hand. Immediate action must be taken to implement it. Mr. Alport's response to his recent plea for a government grant to Pius XII College in Basutoland—the only University College in the territories—was encouraging. The next job must be to arouse public opinion in Britain—and for that matter in Canada, in Australia and even in Eire—to demand a vigorous expansion of this college.

There remains yet democracy. It has often been convenient in the past for empires to rule 'indirectly' through local kings, Rajahs, Emirs and Chiefs. So it has been in the Protectorates. But in India and Pakistan, in Nigeria and Malaya, such systems have had to give way or to adapt themselves to the imperative

needs of the twentieth century. I have no criticism to make of hereditary rulers in the Protectorates. Indeed, I hope and believe that, profiting by their own experience of life in Britain, and knowing what has happened elsewhere, they will be ready to help their people forward to more direct and active participation in development. A beginning has been made with the establishment of Legislative and Executive Councils in Basutoland. Bechuanaland may establish a similar pattern soon. In Swaziland, an Advisory Council to advise the Resident Commission on European affairs is elected by the very small European community, while African affairs are conducted on the traditional tribal pattern. The United Kingdom Government must not be deterred by Swaziland's substantial common border with the Union from the early establishment of some form of interracial collaboration, on a more democratic basis, in the process of government. The "wind of change" knows no frontiers in Africa. As our Prime Minister has recognised its existence and its force, he and his Government must press forward as rapidly as possible to secure in the High Commission Territories the full implementation of the ideal he proclaimed in Capetown:

". . . not only to raise the material standards of living, but to create a society in which men are given the opportunity to grow to their full stature, and that must in our view include the opportunity to have an increasing share in political responsibility; a society in which individual merit alone is the criterion for man's advancement whether political or economic."