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A Problem Named Cabora Bassa

An interview with Heinz Kühn, Minister President of Northrhine-Westphalia and Chairman of the Board of the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, on the subject of German development policy and the political and economic future of Africa.

The discussion about the Cabora Bassa project is still in full swing. The main beneficiaries of this biggest power station complex in Africa will be Portugal, South Africa and Rhodesia. Are you afraid that this project will tend to consolidate racial segregation and exploitation of the Black African population?

The line of confrontation between Black and White Africa runs through this area, and there is no doubt at all that this project will strengthen the white-dominated bloc which is being formed there by the Union of South Africa, Rhodesia and the Portuguese colonies. In different political circumstances the Cabora Bassa project would deserve unqualified approbation. Since however the project as seen by the Portuguese colonial Government is primarily intended to buttress white domination, it raises problems for Black Africa which I regard as threatening its position indeed. I therefore look on Cabora Bassa not solely as an economic project but also as a political one.

Would you think that any Federal guarantee for investments in the African crisis area ex-

ceeding Cabora Bassa will impair or even wreck the position of the Federal Republic in the whole of Africa?

Investments in Crisis Areas

That depends on the type of investment. I should, for instance, deem a project to prospect for uranium in South-west Africa undesirable—particularly in view of the UN resolution which was strictly against it—because it involves the danger of exacerbating the crisis. I would not however, leaving South-west Africa aside, take the same view of social and purely economic investments in this colonial crisis area if parallel investments are made in Black Africa, so that there is no one-sided preferential treatment.

So if private enterprises decide to search for uranium, if necessary without Federal guarantee, the Federal Government would in your opinion of necessity have to offer a recompense by making an investment in Black Africa as well?

No, I should not go as far as that. We have a free economy. If enterprises wish to invest in crisis areas, they must bear the

chances and risks alike. They know after all that they are investing in a crisis area and that certain difficulties—such as political upheavals or even the kidnapping of German engineers and staff—can occur, in which case the Government cannot help. The Federal Government cannot, in my view, interfere in such instances. An entirely different case arises when German firms approach the Federal Government with a request for protection against the political risk. If that happens, the Government must consider whether the investment is of such great benefit to the economy that the political risk should be borne, or whether priority should be given to the political objections. By the way, every western nation will act similarly in response to comparable guarantee requests.

Reform of Promotional Instruments

Export insurance and export finance systems were conceived originally as a purely commercial State protection for private transactions abroad. In what respect do these promotional instruments need reforming from the point of view of development policy?

The Federal Minister for Economic Co-operation, Dr Eppler, has stated explicitly that such guarantee decisions cannot be entirely free from political considerations at any time and anywhere in the world. But in practice it seems to be the case that the gentlemen concerned meet on official expert level before a decision about the grant of a guarantee is taken. They ascertain that the project is of economic interest and recommend the provision of a guarantee. The political repercussions are not always given sufficient attention. For this reason I welcome Dr Eppler's statement that in future the Federal Government is to give more consideration to the political aspect when dealing with such cases.

Other countries are more broad-minded in disposing of political obstacles. Should the Federal Republic in these circumstances stand out as a paragon of development policy?

Let me answer by asking a question in turn: Where are the British or French guarantee projects in which political calculation has played no part?

The Cabora Bassa project would certainly have been carried out by British or American firms if the Federal guarantee had been withdrawn ...

... By the Americans perhaps. As for the British, I doubt it very much, for I know a little about the negotiations. I cannot say anything about the American position ...

... Allegedly President Pompidou threatened a change in the French Government's attitude to the "Ostpolitik" of the Brandt Government in case the Federal guarantee for the Cabora Bassa project was withdrawn.

I know nothing of such a remark by Pompidou. But if he

has made one, it would merely prove that he also gives priority to the political factors. Such intervention, such a massive threat, would show that no investment can be viewed in complete isolation from political considerations.

Need for Decolonialisation

You have suggested a joint effort within the framework of the NATO pact to induce the partner Portugal to consent to gradual progress towards independence for its colonies so as to avoid "another Biafra" in Mozambique. So far nothing has happened in this direction. What chances do you see for such efforts?

I should not say that nothing has happened. But it can certainly be said that nothing has happened which has become a topic for public discussion. The gradual decolonisation in Angola and Mozambique is certainly a very difficult process considering the political situation in Portugal. But it must take place if there is not to be a second Biafra in Africa. For the era of colonialism is definitely over even if Portugal does not yet want to admit it.

The times have passed when a colonial power was able to suppress risings quickly by dispatching armed forces. Any liberation movement in the world will nowadays find a big power ready to support it with arms and military personnel. Frelimo and other liberation movements in Mozambique openly admit that they are more than adequately equipped with Chinese and Soviet weapons.

What attitude do the Africans take to the infiltration of Chinese and Soviet arms?

In my talks with the President of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, and other African statesmen I discovered how little pleasure it

gives them that Chinese and Soviet weapons and personnel are being infiltrated without control into this area. After all, nobody can guarantee that foreign arms and men are being employed only on the far side of the Mozambique border. Kenneth Kaunda therefore submitted to the Portuguese Government a scheme for a phased process to give an increasing measure of sovereign rights to the Africans in the colonies. Full freedom and sovereignty would be reached at the end of this process which he realises must be a prolonged one. I am also opposed to the idea of giving the Mozambians and Angolese absolute sovereignty from one day to the next ...

... Because of the threat of another Congo? ...

... Yes. Why did we have the affair in the Congo? Because the Belgians had not prepared the Congolese sufficiently for assuming political responsibility. True, they had trained "skilled labour". But there was no section of the African population fit to lead. That was one of the reasons which led to civil war. In the British and French territories there was at least a trained upper section — though it was certainly too thin for what was needed. If Portugal were to give sovereignty to its colonies from one day to the next, the result would be sanguinary tribal warfare and clashes between cliques. But if Portugal perseveres with its refusal to start a slow process of liberalisation, there will be a "second Biafra". Neither the freedom fighters nor the African statesmen in the region concerned want that to happen. But they are willing to fight for Africa becoming a continent for Africans. Portugal will have to put up with this fact. I can only hope that the last representative of European colonialism in Africa will open his mind to this

fact because otherwise it will be forced on him.

How should development aid in your opinion be arranged in these regions as long as there are no indications of Portugal abandoning colonialism?

That is a difficult question. Let us take Cabora Bassa as an example. On the one hand, it is an economic project which will in the long term benefit the whole region and thus also the African people in this area. On the other hand, it has its negative aspect because it provides an integration nucleus for the alliance between the apartheid Government of South Africa, white hegemony in Rhodesia and white colonial rule by the Portuguese. The economic consequences following from Cabora Bassa and the military measures by the Union of South Africa and Rhodesia for safeguarding this area—which, incidentally, cannot be safeguarded, the distances being what they are—turn this project into a scheme for the conservation of colonialism. This dual character of the project was not appreciated when the guarantee was given in the days of the great coalition in Bonn.

Would it not have been appropriate to revoke the guarantee?

No. It was my task when I travelled in Africa as the Federal Government's special ambassador to make clear to the African Governments that by approving the guarantee the Government has undertaken a commitment. It cannot simply say now that in view of the objections raised since by the Africans concerned the Federal guarantee is being revoked. A Government has to stand by its obligations towards its own citizens—in this instance the business world—just as it has to honour those arising under international treaties. The Africans

appreciated this point, as is shown by the remarks which Kenneth Kaunda made on this subject in Bonn. I believe that the guarantee for Cabora Bassa, though casting a cloud over the relationship between the Federal Republic and Black Africa, has not seriously impaired it.

Engagement of Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation

The Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation has promised scholarships, pharmaceuticals and equipment for social centres to the Mozambique liberation movements. What does it hope to achieve by doing this?

There is grievous distress in Mozambique — caused by the fierce warfare. There is a great need for social help also in the area controlled by the liberation movements — and the Portuguese do not deny that these movements are holding a large part of the country under their administration. The liberation movements have asked us, for instance, for baby food and medicines. They also asked us to provide them with sewing machines. And they have mentioned the problem of education. We have promised them scholarship grants for German or African universities. For I would certainly feel more at ease about the future of these areas if I knew that there are 1,000 physicians and engineers in them. The Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation does not think much of fetching these people to our universities but would prefer them to be trained in their own African atmosphere and surroundings if that is possible. It still remains to be seen to what extent this can be done in all the various fields.

Aid in Humanitarian Fields

Would it not be possible for Frelimo to use these financial resources through a process of

substitution for purchases of arms?

No, that is quite impossible because we do not give money to anybody. We have made an obligatory declaration to the effect that we shall not give any aid whatsoever for military equipment. That does not mean that I do not, as an opponent of colonialism, acknowledge the historic justification of this struggle for freedom. But I have said time and again, in Africa as well as in Germany, that there are already too many weapons in this crisis area. So we must not provide uncontrolled financial aid which could be used for buying arms. And for this reason the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, which is a private institution and not guided by the Government, does not give money but supplies in kind for aid in the humanitarian fields already mentioned.

To what degree do you think should politics govern German development aid in future?

Development aid given as help for humanitarian and educational purposes or for the creation of an infrastructure should not be tied to ideological considerations. I would give humanitarian help and aid for building schools and hospitals to Angola and Mozambique as well as to Guatemala. The Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation is at present setting up a large adult education college at Djakarta in Indonesia. We are, besides, carrying out a number of projects in countries which are regarded as politically very conservative. We have only to ask ourselves the question whether the development aid helps the people to escape from objective distress and leads to free self-determination, and we must not ask whether a country stands on the right or on the left. For these reasons I should be ready to give development aid to Formosa as much as to Cuba.