

# White Man's Justice in Africa

by GEORGE PADMORE

**T**SHEKEDI, the Paramount Ruler of Bechuanaland, has been suspended by the British Government because he ordered a white man by the name of Phineas McIntosh to be flogged after he had been found guilty of debauching native women of the Bamangwate tribe in the Protectorate of Bechuanaland.

The politicians, who are ever ready to advance the interests of British capitalists, are utilising the present situation to revive their campaign for the annexation of Bechuanaland and to bring it under the complete domination of the Government of the Union of South Africa. They hope that in this way they will be able to achieve what Cecil Rhodes failed to accomplish—namely, robbing the natives of Bechuanaland of their lands and turning them into slave labour for exploiting the mineral resources of the country, just as has been done in the Transvaal and other sections of the South African Union.

Already General Smuts and Mr. N. C. Havenga, the Minister of Finance, have been discussing with Mr. J. H. Thomas, Secretary of State for the Dominions, the taking over of Bechuanaland.

A military force of two hundred British marines with field guns under the command of Admiral E. R. Evans, commonly known as "Evans of the *Broke*," recently marched into Bechuanaland, took possession of Serowe, the capital, and deposed Tshekedi.

Shortly after the arrival of Admiral Evans, the Acting High Commissioner of Bechuanaland in place of Sir Herbert Stanley, a court of inquiry was instituted for the purpose of investigating the reason why McIntosh had been ordered to be flogged. The commission was composed of Captain H. P. Neal, the Assistant Resident Commissioner, Mr. M. E. Liesching, the political Secretary of the High Commissioner, and Captain G. E. Nettleton, a British magistrate, who, however, excused himself from participating.

## White Man's Justice in Africa

The court of inquiry held its session under an awning in the shade of a large tree, surrounded by a guard of marines with fixed bayonets. At some distance away behind a wire fence between fifteen to twenty thousand natives squatted on the ground, eagerly watching the administration of "white man's justice."

The principal figure in this whole melodrama was naturally chief Tshekedi, a young man of about twenty-eight, neatly dressed in European attire, bearing all the hall-marks of a cultivated African chieftain. He occupied a seat within the barbed wire enclosure, next to his lawyer, Mr. Douglas Buchanan, K.C., who, however, was not permitted to cross-examine witnesses, nor to address the court on behalf of his client.

After the president of the court had explained the purpose of the inquiry—namely, to find out the reason why the chief had ordered the white man to be flogged—Tshekedi was called upon to give evidence.

He stated that Bechuanaland was not a colony, but a Protectorate of Great Britain; that the Bamangwate people were never conquered by British arms and had always reserved the right of administering justice to natives and whites alike, according to the laws and customs of the tribe. He then went on to state that McIntosh was an Englishman who had drifted into Bechuanaland from the Union of South Africa. For years he had lived among the Bamangwate tribe, with whom he had completely identified himself by accepting their native ways and customs. He, however, was a man of loose and dissolute character who had frequently been found guilty by the native court of drunkenness and seducing African women. He was the father of a number of illegitimate children by native girls whom he ill-treated. Realising what a dangerous and demoralising sort of creature McIntosh was, Tshekedi said that he had made representations to the British administrators to have him repatriated, but his complaints to the British officials were always ignored. Recently, the conduct of McIntosh had become so intolerable and was such a menace to the moral life of the natives, especially as he was caught actively engaged, along with another white man by the name of Henry McNamee, selling liquor to the Basuto youths, that he, Tshekedi, was forced to take action himself.

McIntosh was summoned before the *Kgotla*, or native parliament, and after evidence had been given against him, Tshekedi ordered that he should be flogged. The chief's bodyguard, seeing McIntosh walking towards his ruler, and believing that he was about to assault Tshekedi, rushed on McIntosh and struck him several blows.

The remarkable feature about this whole incident is this: when McIntosh was called upon by the chairman of inquiry to state his case, he said that as far as he personally was concerned he was perfectly satisfied with Tshekedi's judgment and had no complaints to make. He admitted drunkenness and encouraging natives to drink. He also admitted assaulting a native who had struck an African girl with whom he was living in a hut as man and wife.

Tshekedi's secretary, in giving his evidence, said, "Recently complaints had been made concerning McIntosh's treatment of a native girl by whom he had a child, and also concerning other girls, many of whom had been enticed away from their native villages. But that the officials paid no attention to his appeal." Furthermore, "McIntosh lived like ourselves, in native fashion. The only difference was that his skin was white." (Emphasis ours.)



George Padmore

## White Man's Justice in Africa

Although McIntosh did not make any complaints against the chief with whose judgment he expressed satisfaction, as soon as the European officials heard that a white man had been flogged, they immediately mobilised their armed forces and marched into Bechuanaland.

Admiral Evans was away on vacation at the time, but he quickly hurried to the scene in order to demonstrate to chief Tshekedi that a "nigger," no matter how outraged he and his people might be, has no right to judge a white man, even one of the proven character of McIntosh.

The white man's prestige in Africa must be maintained! Furthermore, the imperialists saw in this affair a favourable opportunity for carrying through their long desire for the economic penetration of Bechuanaland.

In order to appreciate the imperialist motive behind this whole affair, it is first of all necessary for the reader to get a clear picture of the relationship which exists between Bechuanaland and Great Britain.

Here is a country with an area of 275,000 square miles; with tremendous unexploited mineral and agricultural resources. Bechuanaland, Swaziland and Basutoland are the only remaining parts of South Africa which have not yet been annexed and reduced to the status of colonies of British imperialism. As Protectorates they still retain a certain amount of political independence.

Bechuanaland is divided up into a number of chieftainships. Bamangwate is the most important. Each chief is responsible for the administration of his own territory, under the "protection" of the King of England, who is represented on the spot by a Resident Commissioner, who in turn works under the direction of a High Commissioner with headquarters in Mafeking, Cape Province. This in brief is the political status of Bechuanaland within the British Empire.

Chief Tshekedi is not the rightful king of the Bamangwate people. He is only acting as regent during the minority of his nephew, Seretse, a boy of eleven, the son of the former king Sekgome, who died in 1925. Tshekedi, however, is the son of *Khama*, the most famous king of Bechuanaland, one of the greatest reformers of Africa. It was during the life of Khama that many administrative and social reforms were introduced and that alcohol was strictly forbidden in Bechuanaland.

Tshekedi was a student at the native university of Lovedale in Cape Colony, but before he could complete his academic career he was called home to assume the leadership of his people on behalf of his younger nephew.

During these years, Tshekedi, loyal to the traditions of his father, has devoted himself with all his energy and resources to improving the economic and social conditions of his people. Like his father, Tshekedi is rightly jealous of the political independence of his country, and has had to fight against all the machinations of the capitalists; especially the *British South Africa Company*, with a capital of £6,570,000, which is not satisfied with the mining concessions obtained in 1930, but is determined to annex Bechuanaland and the other native protectorates and place them under the Union Government so as to open the way for the unhampered exploitation of these territories.

Ever mindful of what his father once wrote to the British Government: "to fight against drink is to fight against demons and not against men. I dread the white men's drink more than all the agasses (spears) of the Matabele," Tshekedi has had to wage a ruthless fight against the European liquor traders. He has made the consumption of alcohol a cardinal offence.

Conscious of the degradation which all subject peoples are reduced to, once finance-capital gets a foothold in a backward country, Tshekedi has consistently refused to surrender the political rights of his people and be ruled by Negro-hating politicians in Pretoria.

Because of this anti-imperialist attitude Tshekedi is *persona non grata* with the powers that be. He is hated by them, they have done everything possible to undermine his authority; but thanks to his devotion to the enlightenment of his race and the advancement of Bechuanaland, the European officials have never been able to inveigle him into any position whereby they could get rid of him.

Commenting on the hostile attitude of white South Africa towards Bechuanaland and other self-governing native territories, Dr. Raymond Leslie Buell, one of the foremost authorities on Africa, states in his book *The Native Problem in Africa*: "The people of South Africa have recurrently advocated the annexation of these protectorates." (Vol. I, page 191.) Furthermore, in order to ruin the economic basis of the natives, whose chief occupation is cattle raising, the South African Government has imposed an embargo upon their animals. The proclamation states *inter alia*: "It is the policy of the Union Government to prohibit the entrance of cattle from Bechuanaland except the animals weigh not less than 1,000 pounds in the case of oxen and 750 pounds in the case of cows." (Proclamation No. 40 of 1926.)

This shows the extent to which economic warfare has been carried on against the blacks.

The McIntosh incident is now being utilised by the officials who are merely tools of the powerful

## White Man's Justice in Africa

British South Africa Company, and its director, Lord Lloyd, former High Commissioner for Egypt and ardent imperialist, to get rid of all opposition. This is most evident, judging from the remarks of Admiral Evans, who, at the close of the inquiry, delivered a most arrogant and bombastic tirade against Tshekedi in which he said: "Although you are known to be a decent, clean-living man, and a clever man, you have frequently flouted the Administration, while professing loyalty and allegiance to the King. You admit flogging a European after judging him in your own native courts. . . .

*"You have set a very bad example to your own tribe and other chiefs. It appears that your overmastering passion is your selfishness and your study of your own personal rights and privileges."*

"For your deliberate and flagrant violation of a Protectorate law well known to you, I shall suspend you from the exercise of your functions as acting chief at his Majesty's pleasure, and you will not be allowed to reside in the Bamangwate Reserve."

This diatribe lets the cat out of the bag! It affords us the best revelation of the perverted sense of British "justice." Here is a white official, surrounded by the armed might of the most powerful imperialist state of the world, invading the territory of an unarmed and defenceless people, showering abuse upon a native ruler before his tribe. On the one hand, this little Mussolini admits that chief Tshekedi is a man of unimpeachable character—a testimony which even his oppressors are compelled to publicly admit. But his great crime is that he is "selfish" and that he is "jealous of his personal rights and privileges." What are these "personal rights and privileges"?

Surely Tshekedi cannot be accused of being a despot or a man with any ambitions for personal power. For during the course of the inquiry, the Rev. A. M. Chirgwin, of an English Missionary Society, working among the Bamangwates, told the commission of inquiry that "*Tshekedi was a hard-working, unselfish ruler, seeking only the good of his people . . . forward looking, cautiously progressive, convinced of the value of education.*"

*"He maintains a school of 700 at his own expense. . . . He is not an autocrat but the mouthpiece of his people. . . ."*

This statement is the unanimous testimony of all who knew the young chief—a man who has been entrusted to the Regency of his young nephew and has never manifested any desire to usurp power.

Because Tshekedi is opposed to the absorption of his country within the political jurisdiction of the South African Union, the Government is determined to get rid of him by hook or crook. Furthermore, the white man's prestige must be rigidly upheld. For how can the British imperialists continue to maintain their strangle-hold over hundreds of millions of Negroes, Indians and other coloured races, once it becomes known that an African chief of Bechuanaland in defending the morals of his people and the chastity of their women ordered the flogging of a Nordic?

The mentality of the British overlords is exactly the same as Hitler's and the Nazis', who are persecuting the Jews on account of their race.

In Africa, a white man is a white man, no matter whether he be the King of England or a drunken degenerate like McIntosh; while a black man is a "nigger," a despised and contemptible creature to be humiliated and degraded irrespective of the fact that he bears the irreproachable character of a Tshekedi.

Therefore, it is no surprise that the London *Daily Mail*, the mouthpiece of that British fascist, Lord Rothermere, writes:

"In such a country as South Africa, where one and a half million whites live among six million coloured people, and in such a protectorate as Bechuanaland, where there are only 1,700 Europeans among 150,000 natives, such conduct as Tshekedi's cannot be permitted."

So white men, rich and poor, high and low, must always stand together to "keep the 'niggers' in their place."

"Evans of the *Brake*"—Viceroy of Bechuanaland, cock-hatted and spurred, surrounded by the armed might of the best armed imperialist state of the world, has demonstrated by his melodramatic display before the Bamangwate people the true character of British "justice."

Mr. J. H. Thomas, the Secretary for the Dominions, realising the effect which this would have upon the colonial peoples of the Empire, tried to save the prestige of British imperialism by re-instating Tshekedi—but only after the young chief had been forced to sign a statement surrendering his right to try a white man before a native court. No matter how the politicians at Whitehall try to whitewash this affair, the attitude of Admiral Evans has once and for all removed before the whole world the hypocritical mask behind which British imperialists masquerade as the "trustees" and "protectors" of the so-called backward races.

The Negroes in South Africa may well thank Admiral Evans for giving them such a dramatic exhibition of "white man's justice."



An example of segregation in Cape Town

Photograph by Dr. von Heimburg. By courtesy of Dr. von Heimburg and the *Münchener Illustrierte Presse*



In South Africa the racial segregation is so extreme that certain of the "rickshaws" drawn by natives are strictly reserved for white people, who of course would never think of using them if they served to transport natives as well.

That is why the legs of this unfortunate black runner are painted in white chalk—to show that other blacks have no right to engage him: *For Europeans only!*

Photograph by Dr. von Heimburg. By courtesy of Dr. von Heimburg and the *Münchener Illustrierte Presse*