

Trusteeship: the New Imperialism

By George Padmore

HOW truly the aphorism "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose"—the more things change, the more they are the same—can be applied to the colonial question. During the war this question, which affects the destinies of the overwhelming majority of mankind, was relegated to the background of international affairs. Decent people did not concern themselves with such matters as "native affairs."

Reactionaries as well as progressives did everything possible to conceal from the common people of the world the fundamental social and economic nature of the conflict between the Fascist powers and the Democracies.

But now that the war is over, the real imperialistic designs of the conflict, masked behind anti-Fascist slogans, can no longer be concealed. For no sooner had Japan surrendered than the colonial masses of Southeast Asia, without asking the permission of their erstwhile European masters—Britain, France, and Holland—began to assert their right to national independence.

Anti-Fascist slogans, having served their purpose against the Fascist powers, were immediately discarded. And the Democracies joined forces with the Japanese in a bloody war of intervention against the natives of Indonesia and Indo-China. These down-trodden colored slaves, who for centuries have been carrying the "White Man's Burden," are fighting for the very principles of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" proclaimed in the preamble of the United Nations' Charter.

Today every imperialist power, great and small, realizes that something has to be done, and done quickly, to arrest this Asiatic awakening, which is the most significant historic event among the oppressed and exploited of the earth since the Russian Revolution. Truly a spectre is haunting the colonial ministries of Britain, France, and the Netherlands. The spectre of colonial revolution!

Even the stronghold of Tory reaction, the British Foreign Office, is beginning to recognize the close relationship between the colonial question and world peace and security and that to continue its traditional ostrich-like pol-

The European colonial powers do not contemplate any immediate liquidation of their empires. They are now adjusting the framework to the moral cant of the period.

icy of ignoring "native affairs" might well lead to international friction which may prematurely involve the Great Powers in another war.

The proposed solution to the colonial problem is the trusteeship system. What really is the difference between the old League of Nations mandates and the trusteeship system?

It is precisely because the Colonial Office experts realize that there is "no revolutionary change involved" that they have advised the Foreign Office to consent to the transfer of the League mandates to the new trusteeship, providing proper agreements are arranged whereby the Colonial Office will continue to administer the territories in question. This they will do in the name of the United Nations Trusteeship Council instead of the defunct League of Nations Mandates Commission. It is a purely technical transaction.

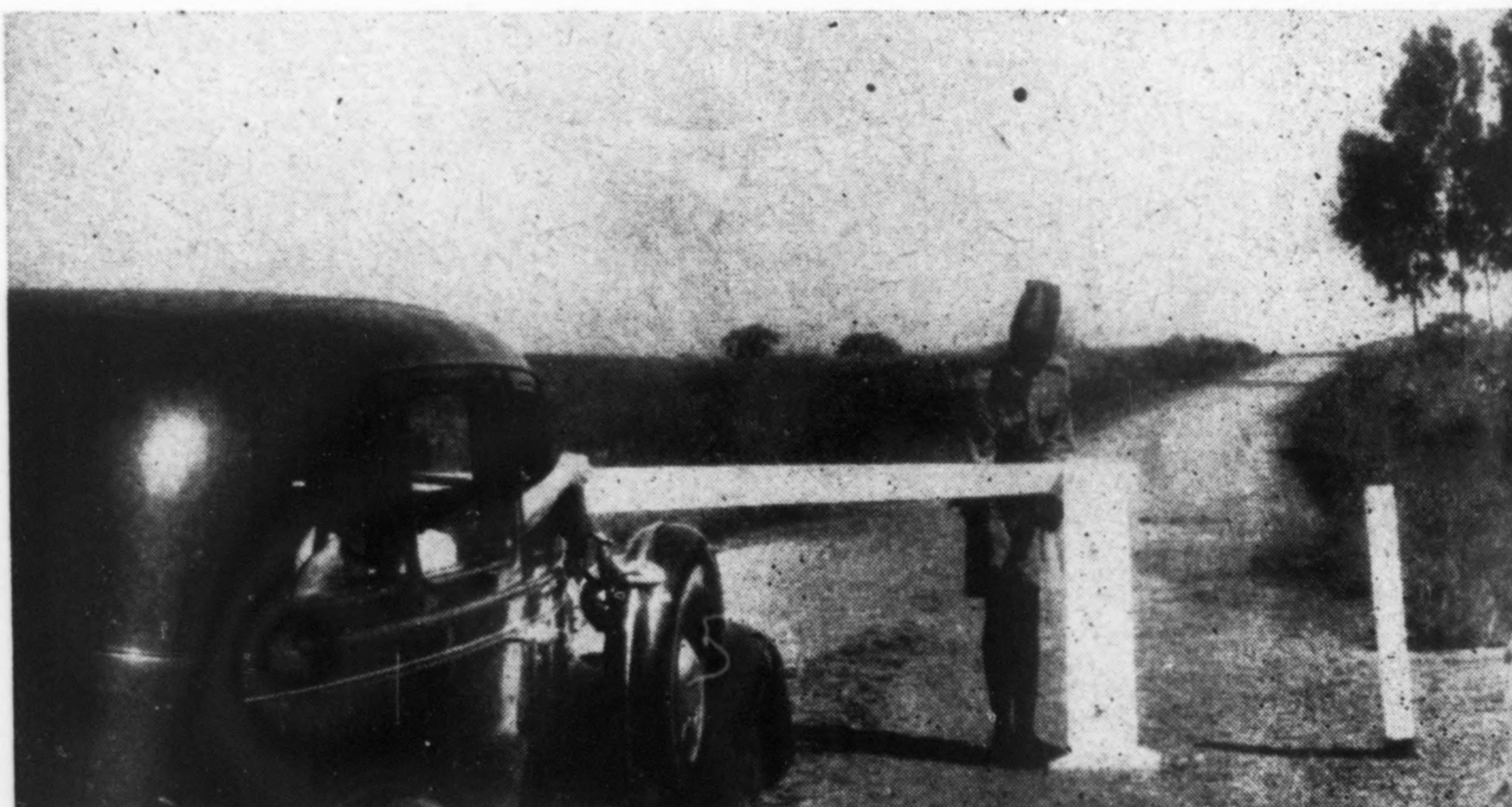
Let us look at the proposed new trusteeship system and see what is its real character. In actuality it is nothing more than a continuation of the mandates system inaugurated under the

now defunct League of Nations, modified and refurbished to accommodate the conflicting ideologies of the Great Powers.

Masses Duped

During the First World War, the statesmen of the western powers duped the masses of people into believing that they were fighting for "democracy" and "self-determination," and that there would be no "annexations." These shibboleths were embodied in points 5 to 12 of the famous "fourteen points" of President Wilson, which were the basis of the armistice agreement. In order at one and the same time to swindle their dupes further and achieve their imperialist ends behind a democratic façade, the mandates system was evolved.

In the course of the war of 1914-18 the Allied Powers entered into certain secret undertakings to carve up the German and Ottoman Empires. As an inducement to betray Germany and to come in on the side of the Allies, Britain and France promised a share of the colonial spoils to the Italian imperialist, who, in the words of Bismarck, had "large appetites but such poor teeth." This particular bargain was never honored, on the grounds that the Italians at Caporetto had proved themselves rather a liability than an asset to Allied arms.



British border guard at the turnpike between the Belgian Congo and British Uganda.

Photo Pasi



British Combine

There is no lack of skill among Africans. Nigerians are shown here making a mat from palm leaves and midribs at Badoggi, near Bida. Fully 60,000 people are engaged in matmaking in Nigeria, one of the country's most flourishing crafts.

It was in seeking a device for sharing up the colonial swag without ostensibly contravening the Wilsonian declaration on "no annexation," that the wily Jan Christian Smuts came into the picture as rescuer. With the aid of the late Lord Lothian (at the time Mr. Philip Kerr and private secretary to Lloyd George), General Smuts drafted a plan for the League of Nations and outlined a formula which became the basis of the mandates system. His business was to give an ideological covering to the *Herrenvolk* doctrine implicit in his plan. But General Smuts, having had considerable experience in dealing with the native problem in South Africa was well versed to propound the theory that the inhabitants of territories in the possession of the defeated powers were barbarians and "unfit to stand by themselves in the strenuous conditions of the modern world."

This out-and-out Nazi racial doctrine was embodied in the Covenant of the League of Nations under Article 22, and became the cornerstone of the mandates system. A struggle developed behind the scenes between the proponents of the old colonial system of annexation, Lloyd George and Clemenceau, and Wilson, representative of the school of new liberal imperialism. The old school won hands down. The naive idealism of the ex-college professor was no match for the realism of the two most nimble bourgeois politicians of their day, fighting tooth and nail to

maintain a hard-dying Imperialism. Many of the amendments which Wilson had incorporated into the mandates provisions were twisted into ambiguities and whittled down by Smuts, while those that remained were "glossed over with brilliant rhetoric."

Thus 67,000 square miles of Turkish territory in the Middle East were divided between Britain and France, Britain securing Mesopotamia (Iraq), Trans-Jordan and Palestine, while France came into possession of Syria and the Lebanon. These were "A" Mandates.

The "B" Mandates were located in Africa and were distributed as follows: German East Africa, now known as Tanganyika, and parts of the Cameroons and Togoland were secured by Britain, while the remaining sections of Germany's colonies in West Africa went to France. Ruanda Urundi (about 20,000 square miles of German East Africa) was allocated to Belgium as a sop for the devastation which that country had suffered. General Smuts having rendered yeoman service to the British imperialist cause in the campaign in Africa, and having helped Lloyd-George in putting the mandates system over on Wilson, South Africa was allowed to annex German South West Africa as a "C" Mandate. The other territories in this last category, situated in the Pacific, were divided among Australia, New Zealand and Japan, then Britain's ally. Australia

got Nauru and New Guinea, New Zealand and western Samoa, and Japan the Marianne, Caroline and Marshal islands.

Out of 971,377 square miles of German and Turkish territory shared out, the British and French Empires were enlarged to the extent of 671,867 square miles. Not so bad after all, considering that the war had been fought for "democracy" and "self-determination."

The Mandates Commission

The share-out having been effected, the League Council, dominated by Britain and France, set up a Mandates Commission, whose purpose was to supervise the carrying out of the terms of the mandates. This Mandates Commission was responsible solely to the League Council and not to the General Assembly. The "crudity of conquest was draped in the veil of morality," in the words of the historian H. A. L. Fisher, and the Mandatory Powers pledged themselves to operate their mandates on the humanitarian principle of "trusteeship." That is to say, they covenanted themselves not to exercise their imperialist propensities in their dealings with the inhabitants of mandated territories, and in the spirit of Christian missionaries "to promote to the utmost . . . the material and moral well-being and social progress of the inhabitants," and to prepare them for ultimate self-government.

Now that the Second World War is over and the question of the re-division of colonies is being discussed by the United Nations, the organization which has replaced the League of Nations, the statesmen are once again faced with the problem of finding some machinery for maintaining their imperialist system under a new disguise. The mandates system having served its intended purpose, it is now necessary to change its form, though not its substance. In place of the discredited term "mandates," "trusteeship," which was ostensibly the purpose of the League of Nations mandates, will now be enthroned as the idea of the system.

The idea of "trusteeship," however, is nothing new, historically speaking. In fact, it is an echo of the old formula of the Berlin Congress of 1885, at which the powers of Europe with interests in Africa solemnly declared "in the name of Almighty God" that in developing trade and civilization in certain regions of Africa they would set themselves the task of "furthering the material and moral well-being of the native populations." Similar declarations of "trusteeship" were also embodied in the Brussels Act of 1890, in which the high contracting parties, evoking the name of God, reiterated their pledge effect-



Alice Schalek from *Three Lions*

These African workers are salt carriers in British Uganda.

ively to protect the aboriginal populations of Africa and to ensure that vast continent the benefits of peace and civilization. What peace, what civilization have they brought to the Africans? The peace that makes their land a desert, the civilization that turns them into hewers of wood and drawers of water for their predatory masters.

The "trusteeship" formula came up once again in the Algeiras Act of 1906, which, in fact, first promulgated the mandates principle by obliging Britain, France, and Spain to submit annual reports to the powers signing that act, and to permit representatives from Switzerland to visit Morocco and investigate the carrying out of the terms of the Act. These stipulations, however, did not save the Moors from being annexed by the French imperialists. Even King Leopold, notorious in connection with the infamous Congo atrocities, declared to the gathering of eminent people he collected at a conference in Brussels in 1876 that "to open to civilization the only part of our globe

where it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the darkness which envelops whole populations, is a crusade, if I may say so, a crusade worthy of this century of progress. And at once there was founded the National Association for the Exploitation and Civilization of Central Africa, which administered the Belgian Congo.

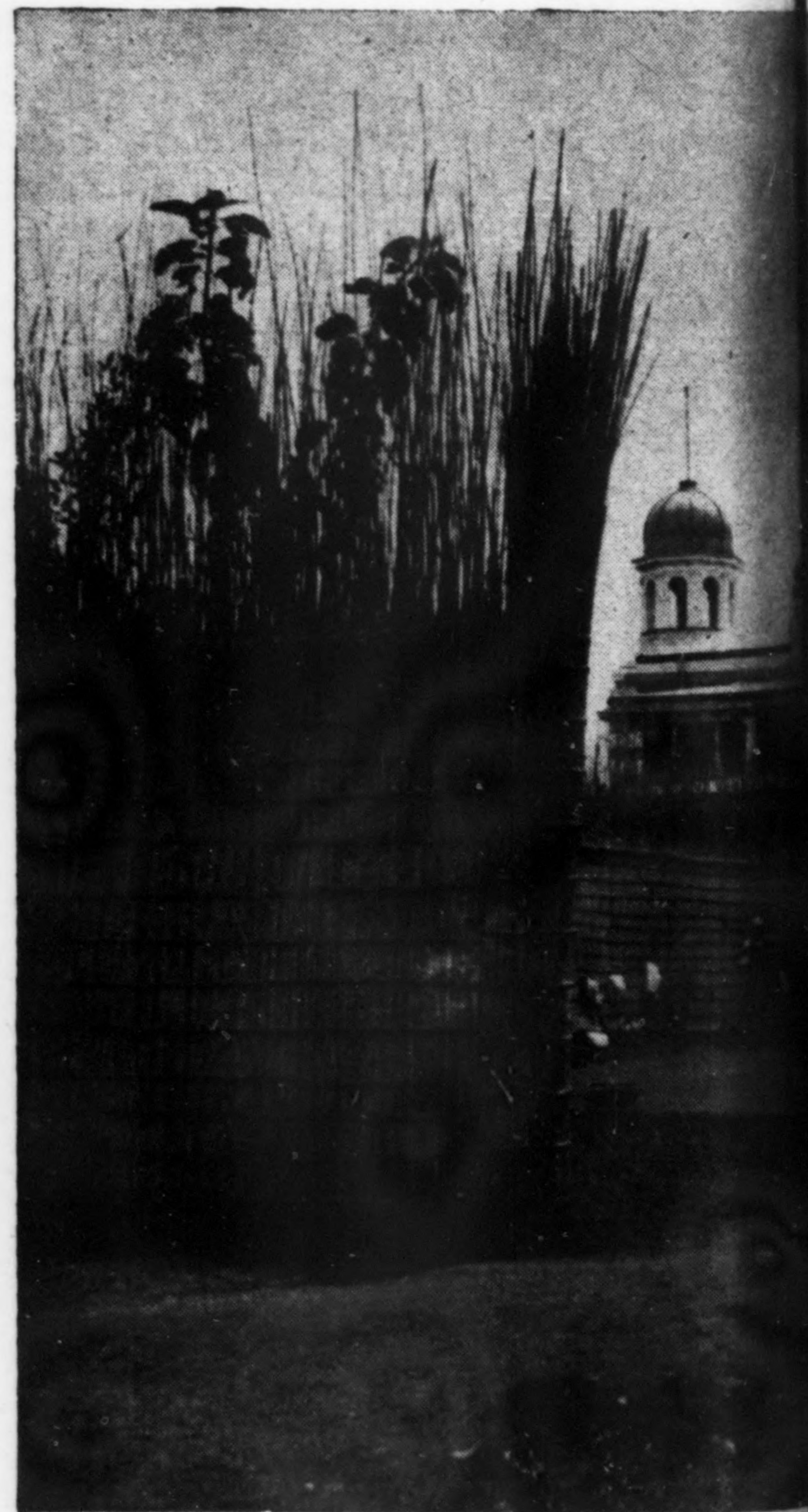
Hence all this talk about "trusteeship," which apologists for imperialism assert is the best safeguard of the interests of the so-called backward peoples, is sheer humbug. Have not British imperialist governments—Tory, Liberal, Labor—all repeated *ad nauseam* the doctrine of trusteeship for the subject peoples of the Empire? They have even declared "the paramountcy of native interests" to be their guiding principle where these interests come into conflict with those of the immigrant white settlers. But have these noble declarations saved the natives of Rhodesia and Kenya from despoliation? There are even some enlightened Tory imperialists like Lord Hailey, who, real-

ising the need for some superficial concession to the native peoples' urgent insistence on reforms, generously go farther than "trusteeship" and put forward the doctrine of "partnership." This, however, the Colonial Office has not conceded for the moment. Perhaps it is being reserved for after the next (atomic) war? Imperialism, open or however it may be disguised, is imperialism, whether "mandates," "trusteeship," "partnership," or what else.

Smuts Enters

Under the proposed trusteeship system three categories of trust territories are being provided for, and here is a striking similarity to the old mandates. In fact, the hand of Smuts is clearly visible throughout. Even the same old phrases are used, for it seems that it is difficult to find news ones with which to hoodwink the colonials.

The United Nations Charter lays it down that members of the United Nations which have or assume responsibilities for territories "whose people have not yet attained a full measure of self-government," will "recognize the



The royal palace of Kampala, capital of native

principle that the interests of the inhabitants of these territories are paramount." They accept "as a sacred trust" the obligation to promote the well-being of the inhabitants "to the utmost," (Ch. XI, Art. 73). To this end, they will ensure—with due respect for the culture of the peoples concerned—"the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants, their just treatment, and their protection against abuses." Here it is all over again. But let us see if there are any differences. We must remember that the trust power will continue to exercise sovereignty.

The composition of the Trusteeship Council is to be a little different from the Mandates Commission. The latter body was composed of persons specially qualified as experts who sat in an individual capacity, not as government representatives. Nationals of mandatory powers were in a minority. Membership on the Trusteeship Council will be equally divided between states administering trust territories and other states, and members will represent their respective governments. It is curious to note in this connection,

that Mr. P. Orts, the Belgian representative on the Trusteeship Committee, was a member of the League of Nations Mandates Commission.

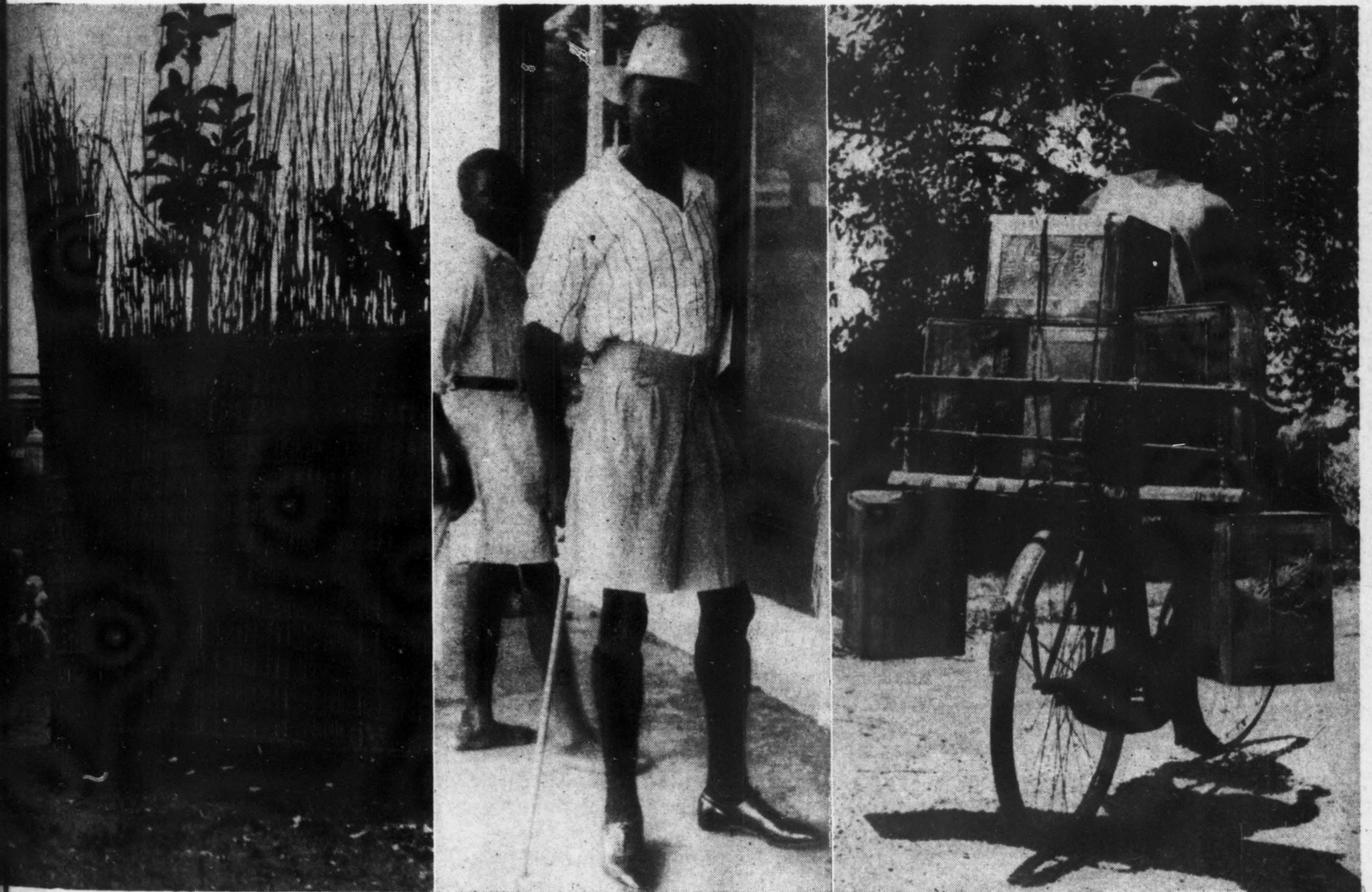
The Trusteeship Council, responsible to the General Assembly, will be able to provide for visits of inspection to trust territories. But these visits must be arranged for times agreed upon with the administering authority. Inspection was not provided for under the Mandates Commission.

One somewhat grim difference is noticeable in the provisions of the trusteeship council as against those of the mandates system. Under the system of mandates, the military training of natives was forbidden, except for police purposes and the defense of territory. The United Nations Charter, on the other hand, provides that the administering authorities may make use of volunteer forces, facilities, and assistance from a trust territory in carrying out their obligations towards the Security Council, as well as for local defense and the maintenance of law and order in the trust territory. This provision obviously portends the military use on a larger scale than ever before

of the inhabitants of the trust territories.

Withal, the differences do not seem to be very great, although the fact that the populations can send in petitions and that visits of inspection can be arranged, all at the convenience of the administering authority, is a small advance. But on fundamentals there is no change. When it was suggested by the American delegate, John Foster Dulles, that members of the United Nations responsible for non self-governing territories should aim at developing "independence" as an addition or alternative to self-government, he was stiffly opposed, in particular by the Belgian representative, who thought that the word "independence" would be to the native peoples like flaunting a red rag before a bull. The question of including the word "independence" was referred to a special sub-committee, together with a number of amendments, and a compromise formula of the trusteeship resolution has been worked out. It is interesting to note that in the course of the discussions the British delegate, Mr. Creech Jones, stated that

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Alice Schalek from Three Lions, Photo Past, British Comome and residence of the native king, who rules under a British protectorate. A dandy from Kampala, Uganda. A cyclist carrying six fourgallon tins of palm oil, which is the load normally carried by bicycle-transport in South-East Nigeria.

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New Imperialism

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in his view political liberty was of little account without the necessary economic and social developments. This is a point of view which the late Tory Colonial Secretary, Colonel Oliver Stanley, advocated in regard to the non-self-governing territories of the British Empire. But how the social and economic developments which the imperialists consider the necessary precondition for political liberty will be achieved in the colonies within any reasonable given time, they do not state.

Having illustrated the inherent imperialist character of the trusteeship system, a word must be said about the pernicious advocacy which the Fabians, Social-Imperialists that they are, having rejected the right of complete self-determination for all subject peoples, are giving to an extension of the trusteeship system. Not satisfied with the mandated colonies being placed under this "trusteeship," they actually want all dependent peoples — *Indians, Burmese, Ceylonese, West Indians, East Africans, West Africans, South Africans, Cypriots, Maltese, to be thrown into the "pool," in order that they enjoy what they maintain to be the advantages of "trusteeship."*

In their Pamphlet, No. 92, issued under their research series in August, 1945, they conclude that the gains which the Charter represents are to be welcomed. They maintain that "the proposals do not yet, however, meet the full demands which have been put forward by the British Labor movement and progressive thought in many countries, over a long period of years. . . . We cannot rest content until the far broader proposals, which the British Labor movement has consistently sponsored, have become a reality." That is, until all dependent territories are placed under "trusteeship."

Now this plan would fit in with the aims of Dollar Imperialism. For any non-self-governing territory — whether Jamaica, Gold Coast or Rhodesia—

brought within the jurisdiction of the Trusteeship Council would be subject to the "Open Door" policy. American business men would then have the same right as British capitalists to buy bananas or cocoa, or copper, or any other raw material from these colonies, on the same terms. And this at the time when Britain must hold on to her imperial privileges for dear life! Will the Labor Party, now that it is steering the British imperialist ship, retract its former advocacy? But this is a matter for Labor Imperialists and their Wall Street rivals to fight over. Reference to the problem is only made as an indication of the very complicated pattern of the whole colonial question. Not without reason, Lord Salisbury once asserted that "Africa has been created to plague Ministers of Foreign Affairs."

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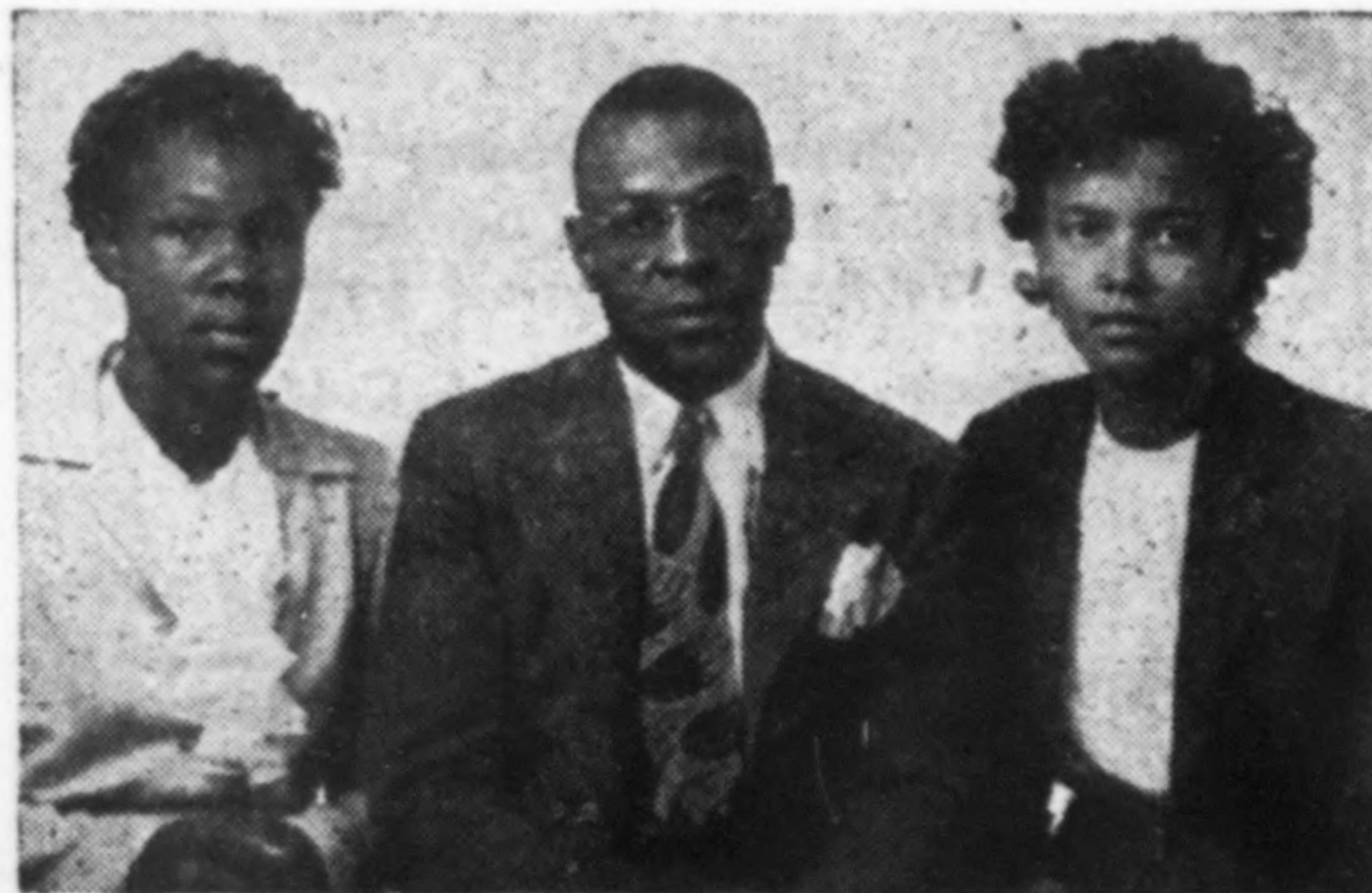
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Ecuadorian Poetry

(Continued from page 316)

Cubans, or Northamericans. Their originality of conception shows that they stem directly from life itself instead of from books. These poems derive their sustenance from direct contact with the Negro soul and the Ecuadorian soil. Frobenius would have loved them. The struggles and the human warmth of these poems lift them above the level of folklore and the festivity of jazz into a deep realization of the full significance of destiny."

Earth, Son and Drums is a stimulating and original first volume of poetry, and we shall now look forward with eagerness to the appearance of the author's *Camino y punto de la angustia*. The book has a glossary of regional terms for the benefit of non-Ecuadorian readers. Some of the poems have passages of *jitanjáfora*—Mariano Brull's term for thoughtless, rhythmic singing—but these should cause no difficulty if the reader remembers that they are put in primarily for their onomatopoeic effect and rhythm.

J. W. Ivy.

One of the interesting new publications is A. P. Marshall's *A Guide to Negro Periodical Literature*, of which the March, 1946, Vol. 4, No. 1, issue is the first since February, 1943. Now that Mr. Marshall is out of the services and back at his former position of librarian at the Winston-Salem Teachers college, Winston-Salem, N. C., he plans to get out his index quarterly in the months of June, September, and December. The brochure is a handy index, by author and subject, to nineteen serious and popular Negro magazines. The price is 40¢ a copy, \$2.70 a year.

* * *

Knopf has brought out an English version of Gilberto Freyre's *Casa-Grande & Senzala* under the title of *The Masters and the Slaves*. The translation is by Samuel Putnam. The book will be reviewed in an early issue of *The Crisis*.

* * *

Among the recent publications on the so-called race question is Margaret Halsey's *Color Blind* (Simon & Schuster). The subtitle is "A White Woman Looks at the Negro." Though there is little that is new in the book, the point of view is refreshing. Miss Halsey writes largely about her own experiences at the famous Stage Door Canteen in New York City where racial discrimination was taboo and white and Negro junior hostesses danced with servicemen of all races and colors. Our author also faces the sexual issue in race relations very frankly.

* * *

First selection of The One World Book Club is George Wylie Henderson's *Jule*. The theme of the book is the friendship of a black boy, Jule, and a white boy, Rollo, in the deep South. *Jule* is his first full-length novel since *Ollie Miss*. Alphonse Heninburg is the executive director of The One World Book Club, and the advisory board is made up of prominent people of both races.