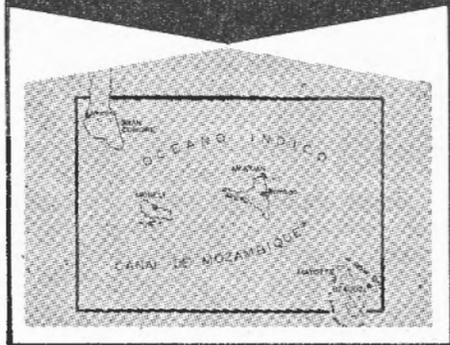


## tricontinental scene

### The Comores: the Dehumanization of the African Man



**T**he Comores is an archipelago in the Indian Ocean, off the east African coast. This mountainous and volcanic land has been known since remote antiquity. Gran Comore, Anjouan, Mayotte and Moheli are the four main islands.

The population of the Comores is principally made up of Arabs, although there are other small groups of mestizos. The presence of around 700 mosques is an indi-

cation of the Moslem majority among the nearly 500 000 inhabitants.

Its economy is strongly agricultural, the principal products being vanilla, copra, cacao, sissal, coffee and essential oils. The cheap labor for maintaining the plantations of the foreign landlords—which constitute  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the arable land and are made up of the largest and best tracts of land, is supplied by the native population. The Comoran peasantry is principally made up of agricultural workers and sharecroppers absolutely dependent on the will of the large landowners. Its tiny industry only involves the transformation of local products. The majority of the population speak and write their native language (Swahili), a local dialect with Arabic characters. Within the colony there are only seventy primary schools and two secondary schools with an attendance of 90 students each. On the other hand, higher education is "off limits" for the majority of the population since centers for higher education do not exist and only the "politically favored" can obtain a scholarship to study in France or Madagascar.

The native lives in conditions which invite illness and then is faced with the lack of adequate public health care. Preventive medicine is completely unknown to him. He lacks every opportunity for taking advantage of the advances of civilization. He is completely isolated.



*He is the colonized man,  
a poor, exploited peasant.  
He gets 5 miserable francs  
for every kilo he harvests.  
To make 100 francs a day  
he has to harvest 20 kilos,  
And his wife and children  
must join him in the fields.*

*Later he spends his franc in a second  
to buy just a little rice.  
It doesn't stretch for more.*

*He thinks...*

*About schools and books,  
medicines and hospitals,  
clothing,  
shoes,  
his home...*

*and to eat—NOTHING!*

*He thinks again*

*—I can die,*

*We can all die,*

*My life is already finished*

*To rebel is to live.*

This 3000 km. territory has all the characteristics of the African colonies. The dehumanization of the African man is the fruit of economic, political and cultural

oppression, in this case brought about and maintained by French colonialism.

The colonialists, led by Admiral Hell, began their domination of these islands in 1841. Their history is similar to that of other colonies on the same continent. France took advantage of the existing internal division caused by the struggle between sultans for possession of the throne and the armed forces which were attempting to take power. An epoch which has not ended began then—an epoch full of crime and corruption that characterizes colonialism. This can be felt in every aspect of the people's lives.

At present the country is faced with either the frauds organized by the native lackeys or the repression of the French troops which are ready to put down any popular uprising that can affect the "existing order." After 126 years of French occupation they are trying to cover up the inhuman actions of the colonialists with constitutional changes. With the French National Assembly's proposed law in behalf of so-called "internal autonomy" they are trying to strengthen the colonialist position and protect their agents by using assimilation as an instrument.

This new law gives the Comores no control over defense or foreign security. Nor in civil law or human rights. All of the control in these important sectors is in the hands of the High Commissioner, named by France. He is responsible for the protection of the public and individual rights and freedoms recognized by the French Constitution as well as the money, the public treasury and foreign trade. He also controls all public information and has the power to annul or modify all the decisions of the Local Congress or to dissolve it if he deems it necessary to the interests of the French State. In short, the local authorities only play a farcical role.

In the face of this state of affairs, the African people of the Comores are daily acquiring greater awareness of the need to free themselves from French colonial domination. This is reflected in the violent meetings held by the native population and the demonstrations held by the students. The French authorities react to all these expressions of discontent by sending more troops from their bases in the Indian Ocean. Here they have increased their military troops to more than 1000 stationed throughout the four islands of the Comores.

The Comores National Liberation Movement (MOLINACO), a political organization fighting for the independence of the Comores, has publicly denounced "the French plan for establishing a military base in the Comores" and have called upon the population to redouble their efforts for liberation. The physical and spiritual destruction of the colonized is an advancing reality. It must be stopped at all cost. The people's struggle is not only against colonialism but it is also against neocolonialism and reactionary domination.