EAST AFRICAN RECORD

ZAMBIAN LINKS WITH EAST AFRICA

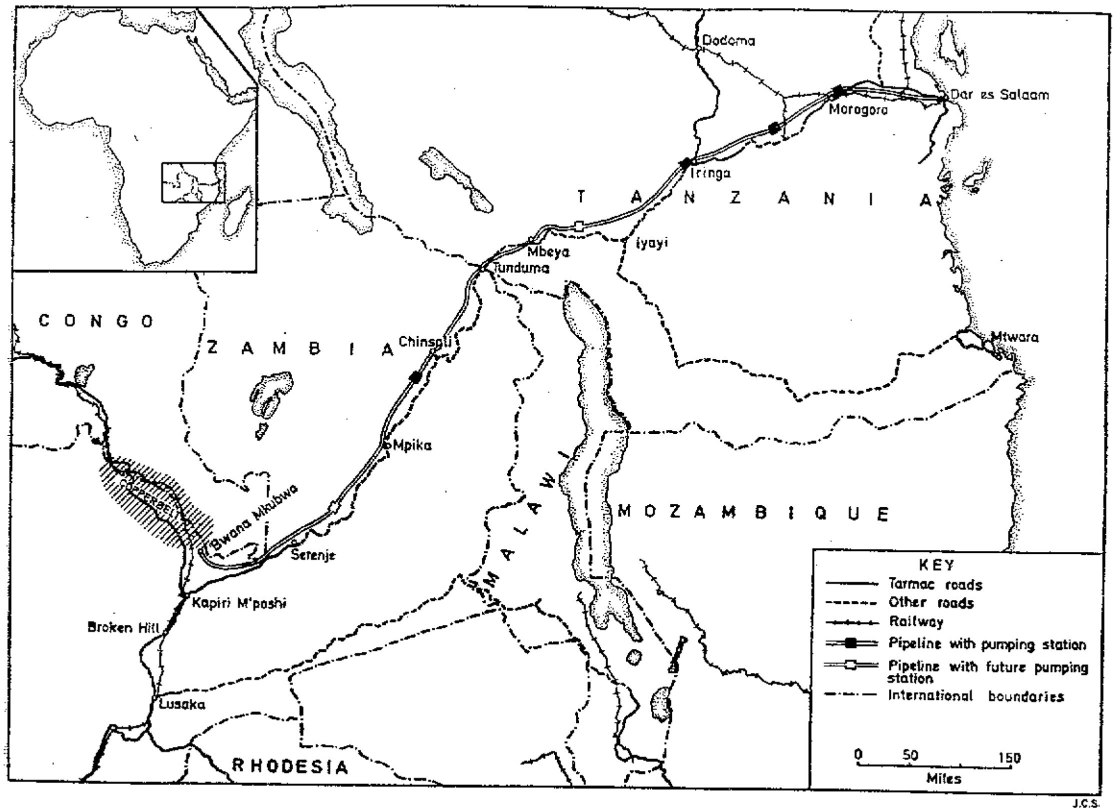
Zambia's determined efforts at permanent political and economic re-orientation away from Rhodesia and towards East Africa are an important geographical effect of the continuing situation in central Africa. The presence of a hostile regime in Rhodesia has caused Zambia, with the close cooperation of Tanzania, to formulate and put into action plans for modern transport links with East Africa. Work on the first of these new links, an oil pipeline from Dar es Salaam to Bwana Mkubwa on the Copperbelt, is now nearing completion.

The eight-inch diameter pipeline is 1,060 miles long, the longest in Africa, and will cost an estimated £16½ million. It is due to be completed by 15 September 1968 despite serious technical problems posed by the route, which generally follows the line of the Great North Road. The net gain in height is from sea-level to about 4,200 feet at Bwana Mkubwa, but in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania the pipeline climbs to almost 7,000 feet. The two arms of the rift valley system have to be traversed and a number of rivers, including the Great Ruaha, crossed. Of four pumping stations along the route, three are being built in Tanzania to raise the oil over the Southern Highlands. From the Zambian border the route follows a major watershed and presents little difficulty.

Oil products are to be pumped from the £5½ million TIPER oil refinery at Kigamboni, Dar es Salaam which started production in October 1966. By late 1968 Zambian demand will be an estimated 315,000 tons a year. Demand is then expected to grow by about six percent a year although the growth rate could be increased if other copper-smelters follow the lead of Mufulira which successfully converted from coal to oil burning in 1966. Further demands would be added if oil products from Dar es Salaam penetrate the considerable market of Katanga Province of the Congo which is remote from other sources of supply. Projected pipeline capacity at 712,000 tons a year is well in excess of anticipated demand. Immediate construction of an oil refinery at Bwana Mkubwa was rejected on the familiar grounds of an inadequate local market for fuel oil, but the pipeline is to be capable of carrying crude oil so that a future Copperbelt refinery is likely, 1971 having been mentioned as a possible date.

The pipeline contract was awarded to SNAM-Progetti, an affiliate of the Italian national oil organisation ENI, in the face of commercial opposition from British and Japanese companies. Italian success is further evidence of their increasing interest in East Africa and Zambia. ENI itself is behind the Dar es Salaam oil refinery; the FIAT company has a large stake in Zambia-Tanzania Road Services which is 30 percent Italian owned; and ALITALIA now manages Zambia Airways.

Money for the pipeline was provided by a consortium of Italian banks, Mediobanca, and IMI, a subsidiary of the state-owned ENI, at the reasonable terms of six percent, repayable in fifteen equal annual installments beginning one year after the pipeline becomes operative. Early in 1967 separate agreements were signed between Italy and Tanzania, and Italy and Zambia: they provided Italian credit of £5,542,407 and £11,070,000 respectively for the pipeline construction. The pipeline is to be owned and operated by Tazama Pipelines Limited, a company owned two-thirds by Zambia and one-third by Tanzania. Repayments of the loan are to be met from current earnings of the pipeline despite estimated running costs of £400,000 a year.



Zambia and Tanzania both passed Acts giving the pipeline company powers so that unimpeded progress could be made. Survey work started in January 1967 and in May of that year actual construction began ten miles west of Dar es Salaam. Some 45,000 tons of steel pipe, imported from Italy, are being used in the total length of pipeline which is being entrenched to a depth of two feet. Costs are estimated to average about £ 15,000 per mile. The main practical difficulty encountered in the field is that of transport; of the pipe itself, of the multifarious machinery and of supplies for the labour force estimated to number 1,000. Potential problems of customs delays at the border between the two countries have been solved by erecting a new customs post at Tunduma for the exclusive use of company personnel. Every effort is being made to ensure that the ambitious completion date of September 1968 will be met, and in January 1968 officials in Dar es Salaam were quietly confident of an early completion.

Other plans for better transport links between Zambia and Tanzania include improved roads and the much discussed Tanzam railway. Road work is progressing from both Zambian and Tanzanian ends. In Zambia the tarring of the Great North Road from Kapiri M'poshi towards Tunduma has been proceeding since late 1966 at a cost of more than £15,000 per mile. In Tanzania major improvements are being made to the road from Mtwara joining the main Dar es Salaam—Tunduma road at Iyayi, as well as surfacing of the main road itself between Iringa and Tunduma. The railway remains a plan but one on which progress is at last being made despite conflicting reports on viability and the enormous capital cost estimated at £ 100 million.

The forging of these costly links marks the beginning of permanent Zambian orientation towards East Africa. Zambia will have direct access to the sea via the territory of a friendly, independent neighbour. Dependable, even though longer, routes to the coast are vital to the development of land-locked Zambia for the export of copper and for necessary imports. Once these links are made Zambia can follow the lead of East Africa in cutting all economic contact with the south. Zambia can also expect to gain from the opening up of her northern districts to modern transport lines. No longer will these areas be peripheral but will be districts through which zones of considerable economic activity are connected. The spinal route from Kapiri M'poshi to Tunduma could come to complement the "line of rail" from Livingstone to the Copperbelt as a new axis of development.

The question has arisen whether these lines of communication will prove to be long-term economic burdens occasioned by short-term political expediency. It is extremely unlikely that these long, high cost routes would be developed except under present political circumstances, but as the Rhodesian situation drags on Zambian action becomes more and more justified, and whilst it might be expediency, it is no longer short-term. Although the new links are high cost, it is doubtful whether the particular capital raised for specific projects like the pipeline would be available for different works. The pipeline is no future burden as it will pay for itself, and even the heavily capitalised railway has been pronounced economically viable by an independent team of Anglo-Canadian consultants.

For Tanzania the attraction of new transport links with Zambia is also great. Dar es Salaam will be given a rich and much-needed hinterland. The Zambian market alone will add fifty percent to throughput at the TIPER oil refinery, and penetration into Katanga would add more. As the gateway to a central African market and hinterland rich in minerals Dar es Salaam will be very much more attractive a location for manufacturing and processing industry. The Tanzania/Zambia trade route could prove a virile competitor for the economically strong Mombasa/Nairobi/Kampala rail axis, thus redressing an important imbalance in East Africa. Tanzania seeks to develop her southern port of Mtwara by means of Zambian trade and even the airport there is being improved to meet increased demand from that quarter. The resources of a vast area of southern Tanzania will become accessible to economic development along two converging lines inland from Mtwara and from Dar es Salaam. Known mineral deposits including coal could be developed. In the shorter term it may be possible to supply parts of southern Tanzania with petroleum products from the pipeline but this will not be possible after the construction of the Copperbelt refinery. Also important is that the new links are seen as a step towards the realisation of the political ideal of Pan-Africanism.

Zambia's re-orientation could have serious consequences for the political geography of southern Africa. A major political and economic divide is being created along the Zambezi: to the north truly independent Africa; to the south the South African laager surrounded by small states, some enjoying nominal independence, but all economically dependent and forced to play the role of buffer states. It may be argued that Zambia's policy will contribute largely to fossilizing the status quo in southern Africa. On the other hand this is Zambia's route away from economic dependence on the south, and it may eventually be Zimbabwe's way out of the laager too.

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