

BECHUANALAND PEOPLE'S PARTY

A Protest Addressed to the British Secretary of States by the Bechuanaland People's Party

re: POLITICAL REFUGEES IN BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE

The British Secretary of States,
House of Commons, London.

Sir,

The Bechuanaland People's Party (B.P.P.) as a political organization finds itself duty bound to address this letter of protest to your department.

We (the B.P.P.) protest against the British Government behaving as a carbon copy of the white government of the Republic of South Africa by openly supporting the racial policy of the white Republic of South Africa by continuous denial of political asylum to the South African and South West African political refugees. The Bechuanaland Government Police Annual Report has revealed that so far more than 300 refugees or undesirable people have been deported from Bechuanaland Protectorate.

We are calling upon the British Government to rescind their decision to forcefully deport the Hodgsons from Lobatsi in Bechuanaland and to remove all restrictions imposed upon them and other refugees, which restrictions deny them the right to tell the World why they have become refugees in Bechuanaland.

Please find the enclosed copy of the kind of permit given to refugees.

We are protesting against the free inflow of the South African police (Special Branch) into Bechuanaland Protectorate and we are calling upon the British Government to take immediate steps to stop them from entering the territory. Because of their free entering into the territory they had been able to kidnap Dr. Kenneth Abrahams and his colleagues inside Bechuanaland. Hence, political refugees such as Messrs. Harold Wolpe and Arthur Goldreich's lives have been threatened openly

that they had to be kept in jail. We demand that these men should be given enough civilized protection outside jail by the Bechuanaland Police and that those who are threatening their lives must be arrested and be prosecuted.

Refugees' lives are being threatened. Refugees' planes are mysteriously burnt in Bechuanaland. We are wondering whether South African and South West African political refugees are different from any other refugees in the World! What are qualifications for political asylum? In 1956 the white government of South Africa gave political asylum to some Hungarians who ran away from some Communist terror in Hungary and during the Congo trouble again the South African white government gave political asylum to some whites who ran away from some terror caused by a Communist inclined government of Mr. Lumumba, according to the imperialists. Some of these Congo refugees were received in Southern Rhodesian railway station with hot cups of tea. It seems the world is being made to believe that everyone who runs away from the cruel racial practices of the white government of South Africa is a Communist. Is the evil only an evil if it is committed by a Communist? Why should they not run away from the evils of apartheid and be given political asylum like the Hungarians and those who ran away from the Congo? What are the qualifications for political asylum?

Our Future is in danger.

The future of the people of Bechuanaland is very dark. The Bechuanaland Protectorate Government is fully protecting the racial policies of the white republic of South Africa. For example it is reported in the *Star* of August 16, 1963, that 'the Administration in Bechuanaland has drafted new legislation, locally referred to as the Conspiracy Bill, which will enable the Attorney General in the territory to order the arrest of virtually anyone opposing South Africa. The draft proposes that the penalty on conviction shall be up to a fine of £500 or three years in prison, or both.' The same *Star* reports that 'A Bill prohibiting political refugees from taking part in activities "which could damage relations with a neighbouring state" has been published in Bechuanaland, said a High Commission source in Pretoria.'

It will be noticed that the aim of the Conspiracy Bill is to stop politicians from any attempt to criticize South Africa, in particular. How can a politician in Bechuanaland be sure that he is free to criticize the Bechuanaland Protectorate Government colonial rule? If South African Refugees are gagged by the British Colonial Government in Bechuanaland, how is the World going to know why they are refugees in Bechuanaland?

There is a talk by the British Government that they are co-operating with the South African Government because they are (the British) doing so in the interest of the people of Bechuanaland. What are these interests? We are not free to enter the white Republic of South Africa either for the purpose of visiting nor for the purpose of seeking employment. We are only allowed to go and work in the mines and farms for the cheapest wages. We supply South Africa with cheap mine and farm labour. The real reason is that they are protecting the British or does all that in the interest of the British mining business in South Africa.

As long as the government of Bechuanaland is still in the hands of the British Colonial Government, nothing will be done in the interest of the people of Bechuanaland. The solution is the granting of political independence to the African people of Bechuanaland.

It is not the denial of political asylum to the South African Refugees in Bechuanaland under the pretext that they are Communists that will solve racial or the apartheid policy which is definitely a threat to the World peace, but the recognition of all men as equals.

Signed: B. D. Macheng, *Secretary General*

Motsamai Keyecwe Mpho, *President*

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